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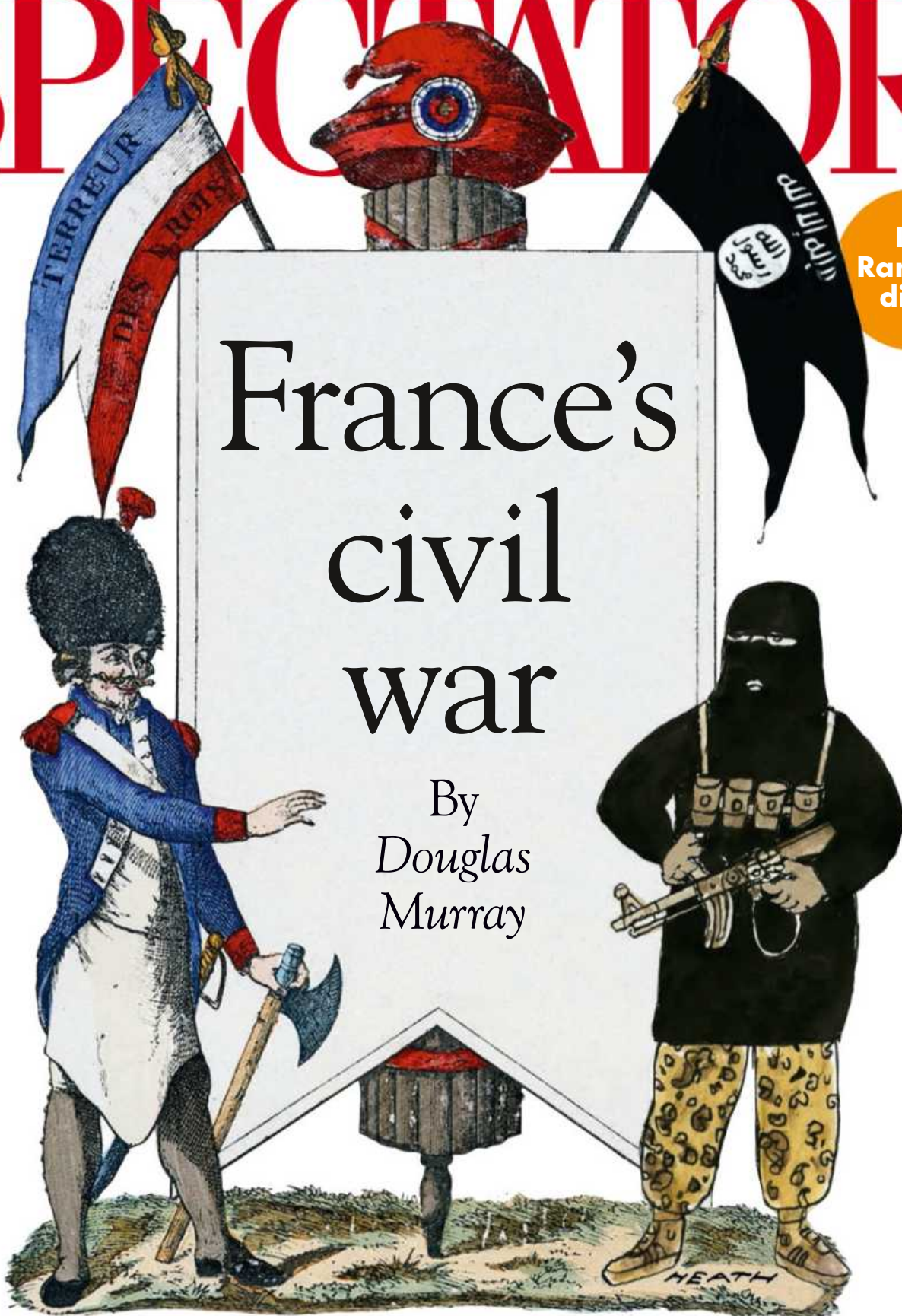
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Rankin's
diary

France's civil war

By
Douglas
Murray



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A better way

To say that the Paris attacks could have happened in Britain is not enough. Such attacks are being attempted here with terrifying regularity — seven have been thwarted so far this year alone. MI5's official assessment is that a terrorist attack on British soil is 'highly likely'. Our security services have so far been very good at keeping us safe. But as the IRA famously put it, spies have to be lucky all of the time, terrorists have to be lucky only once.

So it is impossible for Britain to view events on the continent with any sense of complacency. Still, the Prime Minister was justified in pointing out last week that the more we learn about what happened in Paris, the more it justifies the policies that Britain has pursued. He could have gone further and said that the tragic direction of continental Europe over the last few years has vindicated several more decisions taken by Britain.

Sofia Helin, lead actress in the television series *The Bridge*, this week contrasted the generous immigration policy of her native Sweden with what she sees as Britain's flinty-hearted approach. Sweden is taking almost 200,000 this year alone; adjusting for population, that's like Britain finding space for a refugee city the size of Birmingham. The results? In Malmö, locals now escort Jews home from synagogue to protect them from attack by Muslim immigrants. The backlash is so strong that refugee centres are being set ablaze on a regular basis. The Sweden Democrats, a party routinely described as 'neo-fascist' by the press, tops the polls.

Yes, Britain has many problems, but not on this scale. Germany may be next, after Angela Merkel's disastrous response to the pictures of a dead Syrian boy on a Turkish beach. Her declaration that Germany would welcome all Syrians served only to encourage

more desperate people to make the potentially lethal journey across the Mediterranean. The resulting flow of human traffic involves precious few women or children, and many single men — including, it now seems, one of the terrorists who attacked Paris.

David Cameron's decision to take only Syrian refugees from local camps, rather than those with the money to pay the people smugglers, now looks wise. It was wrong of the government to take just a few hundred asylum-seekers at first, but 20,000 by 2020 is a reasonable compromise. Taking all those who will come, the favoured policy of Swedish actresses and German chancellors, is not compassionate. It leads to more deaths,

For a country to tolerate this level of immigration with no far-right backlash is nothing short of extraordinary

undermines public support for immigration, poisons community relations and risks turning a humanitarian crisis into a political crisis.

Nor is it compassionate to welcome Muslim immigrants and then shovel them to edge-of-city housing estates without job prospects or the hope of integrating in society. Britain takes more than 1,600 immigrants a day — but as workers, not charity cases. For a country to tolerate this level of immigration with no far-right backlash is nothing short of extraordinary. Immigration remains the issue that most troubles the public, but this mainly relates to practical matters such as housing, school places, GP pressures. While the Front National surges in France, the British National Party lies all but dead — its vote falling by 99 per cent at the last election. In Ukip, Britain has a proudly anti-racist populist party that refuses to do deals with Madame Le Pen.

The British jobs miracle arrived at just the right time. While Europe grapples with mass joblessness — a Petri dish for all kinds of social evils — Britain is witnessing the highest level of employment we have ever known. True, a good proportion of the new workers are Portuguese, Germans, Italians and Poles, who are making a mockery of David Cameron's immigration target. But this is a problem of success.

George Osborne has taken too long to control public spending and cut taxes. But he looks like an economic genius compared with almost any of his continental counterparts. And his domestic rivals? John McDonnell, the shadow chancellor, is planning to attend an anti-austerity march in London this weekend with Yanis Varoufakis, the former finance minister of Greece. As they rail against the policies of the last five years, they both might want to ask themselves whether Britain's ability to escape the European orbit of economic decline is really a coincidence — or related to decisions taken in Downing Street.

Borders are now being reasserted all over Europe: between France and the Netherlands, Germany and Austria and — as of last week — 'The Bridge' between Denmark and Sweden. Tony Blair made a great many mistakes, but at least he was persuaded to stay out of the Schengen agreement and the euro, retaining Britain's border controls and the pound. Both have been invaluable.

Cameron could have done much more to speed up our recovery, promote social cohesion and protect the military he is now itching to deploy. But he has avoided a few of the disastrous mistakes his panicked European counterparts have made. Good government means taking the right decisions — but also avoiding the wrong decisions. And for that the Prime Minister deserves credit.



The fire this time, pp13–16,
21, 24, 27, 84



The most enviable gardener, p50



But is he art?, p54

THE WEEK

- 5 **Leading article**
- 9 **Portrait of the Week**
- 11 **Diary** Evil, Twitter and remembrance
Ian Rankin
- 12 **Politics** It's Obama's fault
James Forsyth
- 13 **The Spectator's Notes**
Paris; Jeremy Corbyn; terror laws
Charles Moore
- 21 **From the archive**
A tribute to France
- 24 **Ancient and modern**
Fighting for the good life
- 28 **Barometer** La Marseillaise; prostitution; double-decker trains
- 32 **James Delingpole**
How to lose an Oxford Union debate
- 35 **Letters** The NHS, young people, Judy Garland and crown green bowls
- 36 **Any other business**
The business of hope in Belfast
Martin Vander Weyer
- 14 **France's civil war**
A battle on two fronts has begun
Douglas Murray
- 15 **The politics of terror**
It looks good for Le Pen
Jason Walsh
- 16 **Corbyn's secret**
He's not anti-war, just anti-West
Nick Cohen
- 21 **The joy of sport**
Despite terror and scandal, it endures
Simon Barnes
- 23 **God's man in Baghdad**
Canon Andrew White interviewed
Mary Wakefield
- 27 **Legal cuts on trial**
The disturbing case of Roger Khan
David Rose
- 28 **Connie Bensley**
'New Neighbour': a poem
- 31 **The anxiety industry**
'Stress management' is booming
Leo McKinstry and Angela Patmore

Rod Liddle is away.

BOOKS & ARTS

CHRISTMAS BOOKS II

- 42 **Books of the Year**
- 48 **Alan West** The Silent Deep, by Peter Hennessy and James Jinks
- 49 **Dominic Green**
Samuel Palmer, by William Vaughan
Ian Thomson
Coventry, by Frederick Taylor
- 50 **Ursula Buchan**
A choice of gardening books
Alexander Verey
'Bravery': a poem
- 51 **Tim Bouverie**
Rab Butler, by Michael Jago
- 52 **Neel Mukherjee**
Cockfosters, by Helen Simpson
- 54 **William Cook**
Tintin, by Pierre Sterckx
- 55 **Marcus Berkmann**
on 'trivia' books
- 56 **Tim Martin**
When the Professor Got Stuck in the Snow, by Dan Rhodes
- 57 **Lilian Pizzichini**
Lord of Strange Deaths, edited by Phil Baker and Anthony Clayton

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Into the deep, p48



The Whitworth revival, p64



Don't worry, stress isn't real, p31

LIFE

ARTS SPECIAL

- 58 **Martin Gayford**
Julia Margaret Cameron
- 60 **Sculpture** Elisabeth Frink
William Cook
- 62 **Exhibitions** The King is Dead
John Laurenson
- 64 **Abstract Landscape**
Claudia Massie
- 65 **The Heckler** Thomas Heatherwick
Jack Wakefield
- 66 **Music** Damian Thompson
- Dance** Rambert Dance;
Scottish Ballet
Ismene Brown
- 67 **Cinema** My Nazi Legacy
Deborah Ross
- 68 **Theatre** The Winter's Tale;
All On Her Own/Harlequinade
Lloyd Evans
- 69 **Opera** Morgen und Abend;
Biedermann and the Arsonists
Igor Toronyi-Lalic
- 70 **Television** Jasper Rees
Radio Kate Chisholm

LIFE

- 77 **High life** Taki
- Low life** Jeremy Clarke
- 78 **Real life** Melissa Kite
- 79 **Long life** Alexander Chancellor
- 80 **Wild life** Aidan Hartley

AND FINALLY . . .

- 72 **Notes on...** The Grand Tour
Ian Thomson
- 81 **Bridge** Susanna Gross
- Wine vaults** Jonathan Ray
- 82 **Chess** Raymond Keene
- 83 **Competition; Crossword**
- 84 **Status anxiety** Toby Young
- Battle for Britain** Michael Heath
- 85 **The Wiki Man** Rory Sutherland
- Your problems solved**
Mary Killen
- 86 **Drink** Bruce Anderson
- Mind your language**
Dot Wordsworth

It is socially acceptable to sneer at those who don't get art. The failure to get sport is philistinism in another coat
Simon Barnes, p21

It's unsurprising that Heatherwick's brand of design, with its strong wow factor and skin-deep social content, should be so popular with states built on slave labour
Jack Wakefield, p65

Their clothes literally melted, their naked selves emerging, jerking and spitting like sausage dogs copulating atop an electric fence
Bad sex competition, p82

CONTRIBUTORS

Simon Barnes, who writes in praise of sport on p. 21, is a former chief sports writer of the *Times* and the author of *A Book of Heroes: Or a Sporting Half-Century*.

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Tim Bouverie is a producer for Channel 4 News. He assesses Rab Butler on p. 51.

Neel Mukherjee's novel *The Lives of Others* was shortlisted for the Man Booker prize last year. He reviews Helen Simpson's latest short story collection on p. 52.

Lilian Pizzichini is the author of *Music Night at the Apollo*, and reviews *Lord of Strange Deaths* on p. 57.

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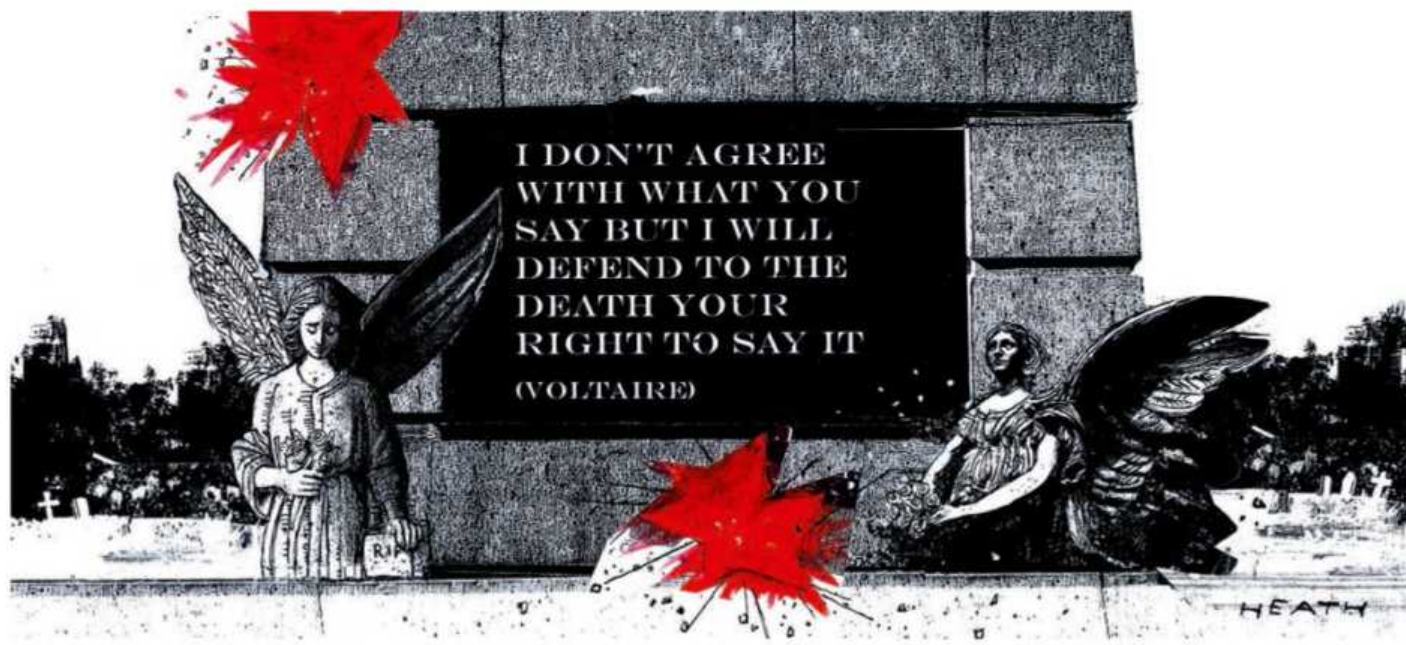
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PORTRAIT OF THE WEEK



Home

After the killings in Paris, David Cameron, the Prime Minister, said that seven terrorist attacks on Britain had been prevented in the past six months. He met President Vladimir Putin of Russia at a G20 meeting at Antalya in Turkey. Mr Putin said: 'We should join efforts in preventing terror. Unfortunately our bilateral relations are not of the best.' Mr Cameron said in the Commons: 'Raqqa, if you like, is the head of the snake... we need to deal with it not just in Iraq but in Syria too.' He said funds from maintaining defence spending at 2 per cent of GDP would go to special forces, drones and fighter aircraft. MI5, MI6 and GCHQ would be able to recruit an extra 1,900 officers to their 12,700 staff. At a meeting of the parliamentary Labour party, MPs shouted at Jeremy Corbyn, their leader, after he expressed unhappiness with what he called a 'shoot-to-kill policy' towards possible terrorists on British streets. A woman in Bicester, Oxfordshire, was arrested after a beauty salon posted a notice on Facebook saying that it would no longer be 'taking bookings from anyone from the Islamic faith'.

The day before the killings in Paris, Mohammed Emwazi, a Kuwaiti-born British member of the Islamic State group, nicknamed Jihadi John, who had murdered hostages on video, was killed in Raqqah, Syria, by an American drone alerted by British intelligence. A charter flight landed in Glasgow with the first of 1,000 Syrian refugees due to arrive in Britain before

Christmas. Two schools in east London were closed for a week to be rid of infestations of false widow spiders. Two 'lads' mags', *FHM* and *Zoo*, ceased publication.

Warren Mitchell, who played Alf Garnett in *Till Death Us Do Part*, died, aged 89. Saeed Jaffrey, the film actor, died aged 86. A 16-year-old boy was arrested after a policeman was seriously wounded in the stomach by a knife attacker in Bow, east London. A 16-year-old boy was found, shot dead, on a canal towpath in Vauxhall, Liverpool. A 20ft cabin and a Nissan Micra were swallowed by a sinkhole at Lindal in Cumbria.

Abroad

Terrorists supporting the cause of the Islamic State shot dead 129 people in Paris, and wounded 352, 99 critically. At Bataclan, a concert venue in the 11th arrondissement, the audience was held hostage and 89 killed. At La Belle Equipe, a bistro also in the 11th arrondissement, 19 were killed. At Le Petit Cambodge restaurant and the Carillon bar opposite, in the 10th arrondissement, 15 were killed. At the Casa Nostra restaurant in the 11th arrondissement, five were killed. A man wearing explosives in a waistcoat fled when he was stopped as he tried to enter the Stade de France at St Denis during a football game against Germany that President François Hollande of France was attending; three attackers died outside, along with a bystander. Four attackers died elsewhere in the city.

Many Parisians lit candles and laid flowers. President Hollande called the attacks 'an act of war', and declared a state of emergency, asking parliament to extend it to three months. Some 115,000 troops and police were mobilised. A raid in St Denis, in search of Abdelhamid Abaaoud (the son of a grocer in the Molenbeek district of Brussels) who was suspected of being the ringleader, led to two deaths and seven arrests. Manuel Valls, the Prime Minister of France, said that the attacks were organised from Syria. One of the attackers had passed through the Greek island of Leros with a group of migrants in October. More than a dozen American states said that Syrian refugees were no longer welcome because of anxieties about security. French aircraft launched attacks on Raqqah, a headquarters of the Islamic State. Before the French atrocities, the Pentagon said it had probably succeeded in killing in an air strike Abu Nabil, an Iraqi also known as Wissam Najm Abd Zayd al-Zubaydi, the leader of the Libyan branch of the Islamic State.

The Burmese parliament sat with 238 seats out of 440 in the lower house held by the National League for Democracy (led by Aung San Suu Kyi) and 131 of 224 in the upper house. Jonah Lomu, the New Zealand rugby player, died aged 40. During the tour of New Zealand and Australia by the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall, a 22-month-old girl in Perth thought better of handing over a bouquet of flowers, but the Duchess proved too strong for her. CSH

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DIARY

Ian Rankin



After ten days away, I spent last Friday at home alone, catching up on washing, shopping for cat food, answering emails. Quotidian stuff. An early dinner with one of my sons, and I was in bed at a decent hour. Checking Twitter, I began to realise that a grim spectacle was unfolding in Paris. Soon enough, on-the-ground reportage was joined by rumour, inaccuracy and blatant misinformation. That's the problem with 'rolling news' — and Twitter has become part of that industry. On the TV, the reports were more measured but far less immediate, with repetitious footage of police cars and emergency workers. Twitter was the more immersive and pulsating place to be, but I soon grew fatigued by this very fact, and by the deluge of opinions. Radio news at the midnight chimes, and then sleep.

By next morning, flowers were being left outside the French consulate in Edinburgh. I was reminded of the *Charlie Hebdo* killings just ten months before. Flowers were left then, too, and the queue to sign the book of remembrance stretched along the chill damp pavement. Many of us gathered a few days later for a vigil in the gardens facing the consulate. There were sombre speeches, then silence and the holding aloft of pens. Later some of us attached those pens to the gloss-black metal railings outside the consulate. We were marking our sense of kinship. What more could we do?

On Remembrance Sunday I had been in London, with a mostly free day. I'd happened to be passing St James's Palace at eleven, so paused to pay my respects while watching a group of busby'd soldiers as they stood to silent attention in the small parade ground to the side of the palace. I thought of my father, who served in the second world war. Our TV would always be switched on for the service from the Cenotaph, and my father would stand for the duration in our modest living room, keeping his thoughts to himself, no visible signs of grief, yet grieving all

the same. I think, too, of his father, who never returned from the first world war, leaving my grandmother to bring up six children. Extraordinary how the world has changed; extraordinary how much it hasn't.

While in London I also — at the artist Alison Watt's suggestion — visited the Frank Auerbach exhibition at Tate

Britain. Born in Berlin, he was sent for his own safety to England just before his eighth birthday, three years before his parents died in a concentration camp. As an art student at Borough Polytechnic, he was taught by David Bomberg, who had served in the first world war. One of Bomberg's most famous works, 'The Mud Bath', is displayed in Tate Britain. It was painted before his war service, yet I see in it the trenches he would inhabit, and the wooden struts required to stop them collapsing.

How do we begin to understand the evil that we humans do, or are capable of doing? Years ago I made a TV documentary about the nature of evil. I interviewed psychiatrists, historians, a death-row inmate, an exorcist and so on. By the end, I could point to an act of evil more easily than I could a purely evil individual. Our best thriller, spy and crime writers play a part, I suppose, by structuring the seeming chaos of events and by peopling their stories with credible characters whose mindsets and motives we readers can inhabit. Then again, fiction has to be realistic. Sometimes, it seems, the real world does not.

A week on from my day in London, I'm in Vancouver. There was no sign of overtly heightened security at either Edinburgh Airport or Heathrow, though it's difficult to see what more can be done without making the traveller's life intolerable. In Canada, the first friend I meet is celebrating the election of Justin Trudeau. No fan of Stephen Harper, she has high hopes of the new incumbent. I just hope he doesn't have to deal with something like Paris anytime soon. In a couple of days I'll be in Ottawa, which itself was the scene of a terror attack last year. I'll probably end up discussing that with one of the regulars in my favourite Ottawa bar, Chez Lucien. My book tour schedule includes a stop there — I insisted on it. Life goes on, you see.

Ian Rankin's new novel, Even Dogs in the Wild, is out now.



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Obama's failure is Putin's opportunity

The principal strategic objective in the war on terror has been a failure. Ever since 9/11, the aim has been to deny terrorists sanctuary. That, after all, is why the United States and Britain went into Afghanistan — troops were sent in only after the Taliban refused to hand over the al-Qaeda leadership and shut down the terrorist training camps. But now, a large terrorist enclave exists in the very heart of the Middle East.

President Obama's reaction to this massive strategic failure has been lacklustre. His main concern is to stress that, while air strikes will continue, US ground troops will not be deployed to defeat Islamic State in either Syria or Iraq. Britain's response is even feebler; to bomb Isis but only on the Iraqi side of the border. The result is that the RAF cannot hit the city from which last week's Paris attacks appear to have been planned.

David Cameron is now trying to change this policy and will present the case for extending strikes to Syria to Parliament in the next few weeks. Yet he isn't confident enough to timetable a vote yet. With Jeremy Corbyn determined to whip Labour MPs to oppose even air strikes, any vote will be tight and he can't afford to lose a second Commons vote on a matter of war and peace.

Instead, he will respond to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee report opposing military action in Syria. No. 10 believes that this will be an opportunity for MPs to declare that they would back a motion permitting British forces to strike Isis in Syria. The hope is that this will pave the way for a Commons vote on the issue before Christmas.

France, meanwhile, is hitting Isis in both Syria and Iraq, but only from the air. The last few months have shown that while air strikes can contain Isis, they cannot defeat it.

This is all a spectacular failure of western leadership and President Obama must take much of the blame. Determined to avoid repeating the mistakes of his predecessor, he is making mistakes of his own that will have terrible consequences for decades to come.

This presents an opportunity for Vladimir Putin. To date, the Russian leader's Syrian intervention has had little to do with defeating Isis; Moscow feared that the Assad regime was about to fall and its initial military attacks were aimed at other rebel groups. But as Putin is now winning the concessions he wanted on the future of Syria, the situation is changing. 'The Russians are going to have to approve the successor regime. That's just a

fact. We have to be realistic about that,' one Cameron confidant concedes. Another British government source says any new Syrian government will have to accept Russia developing its naval base and listening posts there.

Putin will now become more involved in the fight against Isis. Tellingly, it was this week that Moscow confirmed that its civilian

He is making mistakes that will have terrible consequences for decades to come

airliner had indeed been brought down by a terrorist attack in Egypt. This was the precursor to a string of Russian strikes on Raqqa, the headquarters of Isis.

So how far is Putin prepared to go? At the UN General Assembly in September, he enjoyed posing as the leader who was really taking the war to Isis. With Obama deter-

mined not to commit ground forces, one wonders if Putin, who already has tanks in Syria, might see a chance for his troops to take Raqqa. This would be the most potent demonstration of Russian relevance and influence since the end of the Cold War. It would enable him to claim, however absurdly, that Russia is now the defender of civilisation against extremism.

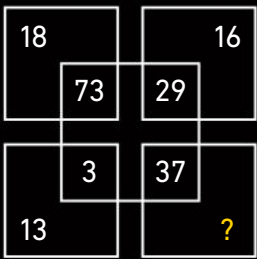
Just a few weeks ago, the Americans were convinced that Moscow had bitten off more than it could chew in Syria. Now it is clear that Putin's intervention has secured Russia's Mediterranean base in the country and given it an effective veto over any new Syrian government.

One of Putin's other great strategic aims is to drive a wedge between eastern and western Europe. He was greatly helped by Angela Merkel's disastrous handling of the refugee crisis. Not only did she incite more people to flee to Europe with an ill-advised declaration that all Syrian refugees were welcome, she then used qualified majority voting to force eastern European countries to take refugees against their will. A backlash is already under way and the new Polish government has indicated that it won't honour the EU agreement.

Merkel has imperilled her standing at home too. In private, British diplomats now believe there is little chance of her standing in the 2017 German elections. Some ministers, however, think her position is even worse than that. One observes: 'She is in decline. It may well be terminal' and warns she might not even make it to those elections.

The draining of Merkel's political capital has implications for Cameron's EU renegotiation. It had been assumed that she would play a key role in persuading other EU states to accept his demands. Now she might not be politically strong enough to do that, even if she wanted to. Certainly, it is hard to see her persuading the new Polish government to agree to Cameron's demand that EU migrants can't claim benefits or tax credits until they have been here for four years.

The Paris attacks are a reminder of the sheer scale of the terror threat. Dealing with Islamist extremism is the security challenge of this generation, but it is a challenge that Western governments are currently failing to meet. If we really are serious about defeating Islamist extremism, then we must — as a first step — be prepared to will the means to drive Islamic State out of both Syria and Iraq.




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THE SPECTATOR'S NOTES

Charles Moore

When Jeremy Corbyn says it is better to bring people to trial than to shoot them, he is right. So one might feel a little sorry for him as the critics attack his reaction to the Paris events. But in fact the critics are correct, for the wrong reason. It is not Mr Corbyn's concern for restraint and due process which are the problem. It is the question of where his sympathies really lie, of what story he thinks all these things tell. Every single time that a terrorist act is committed (unless, of course, it be a right-wing one, like that of Anders Breivik), Mr Corbyn locates the ill as deriving from the behaviour of the West, especially the United States and Britain (and, where relevant, Israel). Thus the IRA were not to be condemned, in 1984, for trying to blow up Mrs Thatcher and her cabinet at Brighton: they were driven to such extremes by the colonial oppression of Northern Ireland. Thus President Putin is not to be criticised for waging what amounts to war in the Ukraine: he is responding to the provocations of Nato. And thus Isis and the murders they commit are all what Marxists call epiphenomena. They are the inevitable results of the thing itself — capitalist exploitation. Now that he is Labour leader, you can get Mr Corbyn to duck and weave a bit presentationally — be photographed with war veterans, dine with the Queen, wear a tie — but you will never get him to deviate from his basic account of the source of all evil. He is the political, left-wing version of a creationist — happy, from time to time, to use emollient language, but utterly fundamentalist. There is no arguing with such people. They are quite outside the normal range of understandable disagreement about a tricky subject like the Middle East. Even if, like Mr Corbyn, they speak softly, they are fanatics. All one can do is identify them clearly and work hard to stop them gaining power.

On Saturday morning, I watched BBC rolling news about the Paris atrocities. Then I spent the day hunting and switched on again at about half-past five. It was extraordinary how little the Corporation had advanced its coverage in the course of seven hours.



It suffered from the curse of 'big-footing' — the custom of flying news 'anchors' from London to broadcast on the spot without knowing anything. No one needs Huw Edwards looking very serious in some boulevard and telling us again and again that 'Paris is today a city in shock.' We want to know, first, as much as possible about what actually happened; second, whatever can be gleaned about the perpetrators; third, the reaction of those directly affected, of leaders in the country and round the world, and of police and security agencies; fourth, the effects on Britain; fifth, a political analysis which explains what President Hollande can and can't do, the state of French opinion and law, the role of the EU and Schengen, the situation with Isis and Syria, and so on. Obviously the human element is very powerful, but we do not need hours of film of people laying wreaths, lighting candles etc. What was most marked — and in coverage elsewhere too — was the demise or underuse of the regular foreign correspondent, the person who really knows the country affected.

Hours before the Paris atrocities, Al Arabiya news reported a speech by David Anderson QC, the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation. In it, he said that because some mainstream media were 'grossly irresponsible' in their coverage of Muslim issues, Ipso, the press standards body, ought to consider making it possible for an entire religious group to bring a complaint about coverage. Mr Anderson is an able and distinguished lawyer. Surely he knows that the entire history of this subject is that mainstream Muslim bodies are constantly trying to criminalise hostile remarks about their religion. And surely he knows that if this were conceded, the chilling of free speech

would be unprecedentedly severe. And surely he should know that this subject is not within his remit anyway. On Monday night, David Cameron said at the Lord Mayor's Banquet that 'It is not good enough to say simply that Islam is a religion of peace and then to deny any connection between the religion of Islam and the extremists.' Under the Anderson clause, we 'grossly irresponsible' journalists would probably get into trouble for reporting the Prime Minister.

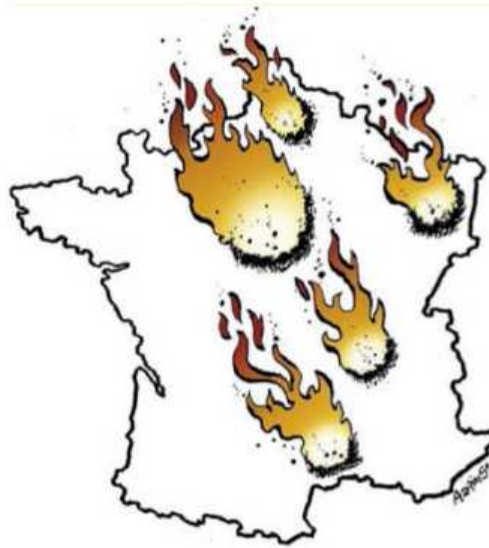
Just before France was attacked, there was a row about dinner in the Elysée Palace. The Iranian President, Hassan Rouhani (much celebrated as a 'moderate' in sections of our media), refused to attend because the French insisted on serving wine to those who wanted it. It is rather as if President Obama or David Cameron were to jack a meal with Narendra Modi, the prime minister of India, because he said he and his team would stick to their vegetables. Obviously, it is very wrong to torture Islamist bigots, but would it be so wicked, as we spend many years and millions of pounds looking after them in Belmarsh because we are not allowed to deport them, if MI6 and MI5 were to open bottle after bottle of premiers grands crus and wave them under their noses before slurping them down with greedy cries of appreciation?

Robert Halfon, a Conservative MP, has been threatened with blackmail about some (hetero)sexual allegation. The press, reporting this story, described Mr Halfon as a cabinet minister. He is not. He is only a minister (in his case without portfolio) in the category invented, I think, by Tony Blair, called 'attending cabinet'. This is a bad development, because it blurs the line between a cabinet minister's individual authority and the subordinate role of all other ministers. It turns the word 'cabinet' into little more than a badge with a few privileges. It won't be long now before people idly ask 'What is this archaic thing known as the cabinet?', rather as they started to inquire about the Privy Council when it seemed that Jeremy Corbyn might not become a member of it.

France's civil war...

... and the struggle facing Europe

DOUGLAS MURRAY



In the wake of the massacre in Paris, President François Hollande said that France was 'at war' — and that it must be fought both inside his country and outside in the Middle East. As the French air force began dropping bombs on Raqqa in Syria, another operation was under way in towns and cities across France: 168 raids in two days. A battle on two fronts has begun.

Chartres cathedral is one of the great monuments of western civilisation, but Chartres was also home to one of the Bataclan theatre suicide bombers. A man from the same area died last summer in Syria, fighting for Isis. In Lyon, the raids turned up a rocket launcher. On Tuesday night, a large-scale counter-terror assault was launched in St Denis in Paris. After heavy gunfire, a woman blew herself up by detonating a suicide belt, according to the police.

That the French police know where to look is heartening. That there are so many places to look is not. Long before this week's slaughter, the French have known that large parts of France are effectively not French.

Ten years ago, when the banlieues lit up and more than 9,000 cars were burnt, the world paid some attention. But it soon sank back into denial. Statesmen talk of the danger of 'ungoverned spaces' in the Middle East and Africa. But the ungoverned spaces in France and in other parts of Europe were largely ignored.

Earlier this year an American counter-terrorism expert appeared on Fox News and claimed that major cities in European countries, including Britain and France, had 'no-go' zones where non-Muslims and the police simply did not go. He was widely ridiculed and even disparaged by the Prime Minister himself. The Socialist party's mayor of Paris, Anne Hidalgo, went further and said she would sue Steven Emerson and Fox News for harming the 'image' of her city. Coming, as this did, only days after the Kouachi brothers gunned down 12 people in *Charlie Hebdo's* offices and another gunman slaughtered four Jews in a kosher food market, one might have thought that Paris had other 'image' problems going on. But the backlash was striking. Mainly because it looked like what psychiatrists call displacement activity.

Perhaps the murder of cartoonists and Jews just wasn't enough, and it was always going to take the simultaneous mass murder of concert-goers, football fans and people eating in restaurants to help the world wake up. In any case, it's now undeniable that there are no-go zones both in France and Europe.

This week's jihadi hunt has focused on the Brussels suburb of Molenbeek. It is

It is no coincidence that France has the largest percentage of Muslims per capita of anywhere in western Europe

thought that two of the terrorists who carried out the attacks last Friday had been living there. Molenbeek is a heavily Muslim suburb — an area over which Belgian authorities admit they long ago lost control.

It undoubtedly shares characteristics with many other poor European suburbs: ugly social housing and high levels of unemployment. But that could be said of many cities. What makes these no-go areas notable is the size and density of their Muslim populations.

It is a problem which no country in Europe experiences so catastrophically as France. In 2011 a report commissioned by the Institut Montaigne, and directed by the noted Islamic scholar Gilles Kepel, found that Seine-Saint-Denis and a clutch of other suburbs of Paris were becoming 'separate Islamic societies', holding themselves out as separate from the French state and instituting the rule of Sha-

ria over that of French law. It found that French Muslims were increasingly aligning themselves with Islamist values rather than those of the French state. It is no coincidence that France has the largest percentage of Muslims in its population (around 10 per cent) of anywhere in western Europe. Wherever the concentration gets above a certain level (perhaps 20 per cent), consequences follow. French social planning put all their Muslim immigrants in one place (and usually a place of mass unemployment). And unsurprisingly, it is in the areas with the greatest density of Muslim population that the greatest problems emerge.

By 2012, the problem of semi-autonomy had got so bad that the French government was forced to unveil plans to reassert the state's control over 15 areas, including parts of Lyon, Montpellier, Nice, Strasbourg, Amiens and Aubervilliers, where the population is more than 70 per cent Muslim and the police rarely went. Two years later, a leaked French intelligence document warned that Sharia law was being implemented in schools in Muslim ghettos. The report gave 70 examples of Muslims turning secular French schools into places of religious indoctrination governed by Islamic law.

The question now for France is whether Hollande's efforts to reimpose French law are any more successful than the efforts of Sarkozy, and whether they are a spasm or a mission. You could argue that Hollande now at least has events behind him. But in the past there have been quite a number of occasions, although not as bloody as this one, when individual cases have broken the surface and temporarily shocked France from its sleep-walk into dissolution and civil war: the stoning to death of a young Muslim woman in Marseilles in 2004; the torture and murder of a young Jewish man by a Muslim gang in the Parisian suburb of Bagneux in 2006; the murders of pupils at a Jewish school in Toulouse in 2012. Each time the Republic rallies, but the country's pulling apart continues.

It is easy for outsiders to point to holes in France's post-war immigration strategy or the failure of its model of integration. And it is true that France has done immigration and integration badly. But who has not? Yes,

travelling on public transport in France you notice lines and routes on which everyone is black and others where nobody is. But there are similar phenomena now across Scandinavia, central and southern Europe.

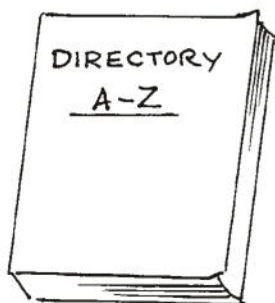
Nor can we be complacent in Britain. It was appropriate for the Prime Minister to leap to Birmingham's defence when Fox broadcast their piece in January. But Birmingham is in fact a striking example of our own problem. The city remains one of the biggest producers of domestic terrorists and Isis fighters in Britain. Perhaps most striking is the fact that nine tenths of Birmingham's convicted terrorists come from areas where the Muslim population is between 25 and 50 per cent (the latter figure being more than ten times the national average). Likewise, before anyone notices the centrality of 'Sharia 4 Belgium' to the continent's jihad, it is worth noting that the group's launch was enabled by Muslim extremists from Britain.

Nor is it at all certain that Britain will continue to avoid another mass casualty attack. The Prime Minister recently said the security services had thwarted seven major attacks in the UK in the past six months alone.

Of course, it is important to remember how many Muslims in France and Britain came here precisely to avoid the fundamentalists in their faith. And there were problems long before the current migration wave. But as countries like Germany and Sweden decide to take in an additional 1 per cent of their population each year from majority Muslim countries, it is not scaremongering but a simple statement of fact to say that the Muslim population in Europe will increase. And at some point other European countries will go on to experience the kind of problems France has. Perhaps this will bring a popular backlash similar to that now under way in France.

But in some ways that would be the lesser of two evils. For if the trend of the no-go zone is not at some point halted or reversed, we must realise that for France, and perhaps for Europe, this will not be decline. This will be fall.

TERRORIST'S HIT LIST



The politics of terror

Hollande isn't seizing his chance. Marine Le Pen might

JASON WALSH

Paris

The terror attacks on Friday have given President François Hollande an opportunity to be statesmanlike, and he has tried his best. He quickly declared a state of emergency and summoned a special congress of the Senate and the National Assembly so that he could deliver a powerful address. 'Terrorism will not destroy France, because France will destroy it,' he said.

Unfortunately, like most things the president does, the speech fell flat. Pictured on the front page of Monday's *Le Figaro*, France's conservative daily (as well as inside the left-leaning *Le Monde*), he looked a small man, flanked by his security guards. The camera can be cruel — as can photo selection — but it can also encapsulate the general sentiment as to his leadership.

Unless he can achieve a fast and meaningful victory over Isis, it seems unlikely that Hollande can capitalise on the sense of solidarity felt throughout France. The French have escalated the bombing of Isis targets in Raqqa this week — but few believe that will save Hollande's presidency. He has always been quick to intervene militarily in the Middle East and North Africa, but it has not made him any more popular.

The French are more enthusiastic about Hollande's prime minister, Manuel Valls, who has sounded and looked tougher than his boss in recent days. The only hope the socialists have, according to some analysts, is if Hollande makes way for Valls to run as the left's presidential candidate in 2017.

Unlike Hollande, Marine Le Pen looks well placed to exploit this tragedy. Unless she says something stupid — and her record suggests she won't — the Front National leader's no-nonsense rhetoric about combating the Islamist threat is likely to go down well with an angry French public. She has demanded an immediate halt to the intake of immigrants from Syria, and says that the Schengen agreement, which allows free passage across European borders, is 'madness'. She was already expected

to do well in the regional elections at the beginning of December. Now she is expected to do even better.

Right-thinking Parisians are appalled at the thought of Le Pen's ascension. One woman I spoke to warned about the dangers of a conservative Catholic revival in response to the terror attacks, led by the Front National. But the party is not Catholic. It is more socially liberal in its outlook — many gay men and women support the party, for instance, in part because they think it is their best protection against Islamists who despise their way of life. Its real base is made up of disgruntled former Socialist and Communist party supporters. A 2013 poll indicated that half of the FN vote was from the working class who felt abandoned by the political left.

Unfortunately, like most things the president does, his big speech fell flat

Nicolas Sarkozy, president of his new Les Republicains party, has been trying to combat the Front National challenge by outflanking Le Pen on the right. He has campaigned against halal meat and now talks about tougher policing in *les banlieues*. But Sarkozy is not well loved, to put it mildly, and he faces an internal threat from Alain Juppé, a more traditionally bourgeois and centrist Gaulliste figure. Moreover, for all his anti-Islamism, Sarkozy is tied to the European project, so cannot attack EU immigration laws in the way Le Pen can.

Whoever ends up leading the centre-right will struggle to deal with the fact that Le Pen has detoxified the Front National brand in recent years. She expelled her extremist father, Jean-Marie, because he was an embarrassment. No longer seen as a ragtag army of holocaust deniers, the FN is now changing the political landscape. A Marine Le Pen presidency might remain unthinkable for most French citizens, but there is no question that the bloodshed in Paris plays into her hands.

Corbyn's secret war

Ignore their deceptive flannel – the far left aren't against violence.
They're just against the West

NICK COHEN

Before the bodies in Paris's restaurants were cold, Jeremy Corbyn's Stop the War Coalition knew who the real villains were — and they were not the Islamists who massacred civilians. 'Paris reaps whirlwind of western support for extremist violence in Middle East' ran a headline on its site. The article went on to say that the consequence of the West's 'decades-long, bipartisan cultivation of religious extremism will certainly be more bloodshed, more repression and more violent intervention'.

This flawless example of what I once called the 'kill us, we deserve it' school of political analysis takes us to the heart of Corbyn's beliefs. Even his opponents have yet to appreciate the malign double standards of the new Labour party, though they ought to be clear for all to see by now.

Whatever its protestations, Corbyn's far left is not anti-war. Pacifism may not be a moral position in all circumstances but, in my view at least, it remains an honourable belief, rooted in Christian teaching. Corbyn does not share it. He does not oppose violence wherever it comes from, as the BBC's political editor claimed this week. When anti-western regimes and movements go to war, his language turns slippery. Corbyn never quite has the guts to support the violence of others, but he excuses it like a gangster's lawyer trying to get a crime boss off on a technicality.

He defended the Russian invasion of Ukraine by saying the West had provoked the Kremlin. His spin-doctor, Seumas Milne of the *Guardian*, the nearest thing you can find to a Stalinist in the 21st century, joined the leaders of Europe's far-right parties at Putin's propaganda summits. Meanwhile Corbyn and John McDonnell have defended the IRA, Hezbollah and Hamas. Like many on the far left (and right), they are pro-Assad. So committed to Syrian Ba'athism are Stop the War that they tried to stop Syrian refugees from Assad's terror speaking at their meetings.

You cannot describe a far left that can overlook Assad's atrocities as pacifist. Nor can you call its members little Englanders. True isolationists think we have no business wasting our blood and treasure in other people's conflicts — a view I suspect the majority of the British share. They do not want to call radical Islamists, Assad, or Putin their

'friends' and take up their grievances. They hope, vainly I fear, that we can ignore them.

Corbyn, along with too much of 'progressive opinion', has a mistrust bordering on hatred for western powers. They do not just condemn the West for its crimes, which are frequent enough. They are 'Occidentalists', to use the jargon: people who see the West as the 'root cause' of all evil.

Their ideology is in turn genuinely rootless. They have no feeling for the best traditions of their country, and their commitments to the victims of foreign oppression are shallow and insincere. They rightly condemn western support for Saudi Arabia. But if the Saudis were to become the West's enemy

Corbyn's inability to state his true beliefs defines his leadership of the Labour party

tomorrow, their opposition would vanish like dew in the morning sun.

These double standards were once a problem for those of us who thought the British left deserved better. Now that we have learned from Corbyn's landslide victory that the British left neither deserve nor want better, they are everyone else's problem too.

Stop the War revealed the devious inability of the new left to stick by what they mean. As soon as they realised that outsiders were reading the site, they removed the offending article. Corbyn was as shift. On Monday, Labour MPs implored him to reject the idea that an attack on Parisians by a fascistic Islamist movement was the West's fault. He ducked into woolly bureaucratic language and said Stop the War's argument was 'inappropriate'. He refused to condemn it, however. How could he when he would be



rejecting everything he believed for 40 years?

Those who want to see the far left for what it is should be able to detect a pattern in his statements by now. Corbyn's response to the Paris killings was to join with other apparently moral voices and denounce the media for not giving equal space to atrocities 'outside Europe'. You do not understand Corbyn if you reply, as Helen Lewis of the *New Statesman* did, that 'the media is full of foreign news that barely gets read' — telling though her putdown was. Nor is it enough to go further and say that Corbyn does not want foreign news that contradicts his Manichean worldview.

Conspiracy theories certainly riddle his far left, who dismiss reports of inconvenient war crimes as lies by corporate media designed to brainwash the masses into supporting western imperialism. The reality, however, is worse than a mere blocking out of unpleasant truths. Corbyn and his supporters do not want us to think about Paris because they cannot accept that privileged westerners can be victims. If Isis kills them, it is their own or their governments' fault. All you should do is mutter 'blowback' and turn off the news.

Understand that the far left believe that only favoured groups can be victims, and you understand the growth of left-wing anti-Semitism, the indifference to demands for women's equality in rich countries, as well as the ease with which they dismiss bodies on Parisian streets. Privileged whites are the problem. We should shed no tears for them.

Corbyn's inability to state his true beliefs defines his leadership of the Labour party. To take the most brazen instance, he condemned the assassination of Mohammed 'Jihadi John' Emwazi by saying it would have been better if he had been brought before a court. So it would. But Corbyn would not have supported sending special forces to Syria to kidnap Emwazi and bring him to trial. He does not believe in deploying the armed forces. Indeed he is 'not happy' with police shooting to kill terrorists murdering British citizens on British streets. His apparently moral stance was built on an outright lie.

A chorus of approval from ignorant cliché-mongers accompanied Jeremy Corbyn's election as Labour's leader. He was authentic. He was not afraid to say what he thought. He was not the creation of focus groups and media manipulators, but an honest man making a new politics.

Every claim they made was false. Jeremy Corbyn and the left he comes from cannot campaign for office by saying what they really think or they would horrify the bulk of the population. They say enough to keep their 'base' happy, and then dodge and twist when they speak to the rest of us. Far from being authentic, Jeremy Corbyn is one of the most dishonest politicians you will see in your lifetime.



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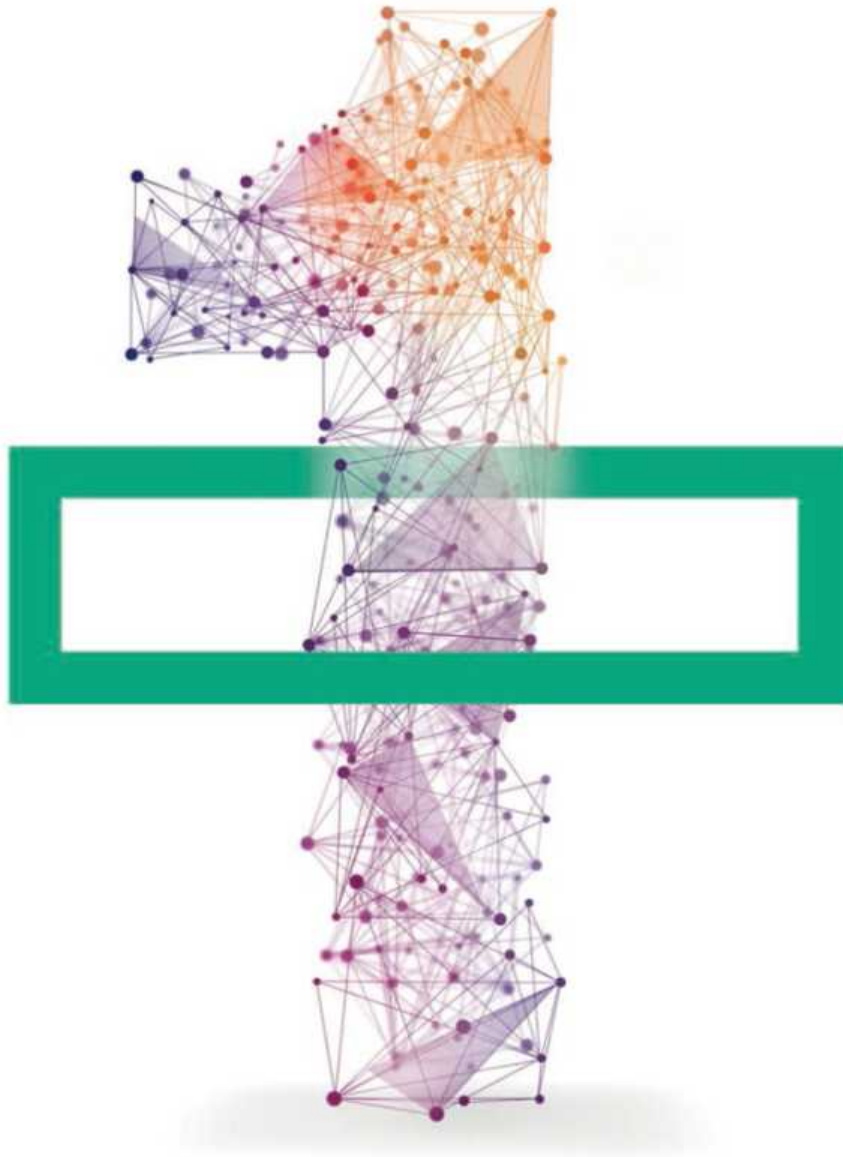


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Accelerating next



**Hewlett Packard
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The joy of sport

Through terror and scandal, it endures

SIMON BARNES

AIN'T it rum? Last week sport was morally bankrupt, finished, no longer worthy of taking up an intelligent person's time for a single minute. This week it's shining out as one of the glories of the human spirit. And yet sport can cope with the contradiction quite effortlessly.

It's hard to know the worst thing in athletics right now, but it's either the fact that Russia has been implicated in a state-run doping programme or the possibility that the former president of the sport's world governing body is accused of taking bribes to cover it up. In football the acronym of Fifa, football's world governing body, means corruption: nothing more, nothing less. In Southwark the Chris Cairns trial continues, with nine witnesses suggesting that Cairns is guilty of fixing high-level cricket matches.

So if we listened to all the commentators last week, we should all have seen through sport by now. We should have recognised its futility and walked away from it for ever. But somehow we didn't. The damn stuff is still going on all over the place.

This week England played France in a football match at Wembley. You can call it a glorious assertion of the spirit of humanity, or a glorious up-yours to all the terrorists in all the world. Either way you would be right.

Five days earlier, France played Germany in Paris, and the match was one of the targets in the city-wide series of terrorist attacks. Three people were killed and others were injured near the stadium. It all seemed a bit personal to me: I seem to have spent half my life covering matches at the Stade de France and I could find my way there from St Pancras blindfold. I've almost certainly drunk *une seize* at the bar near the stadium where the attack took place.

The official response to this attack on football was to play another football match; the unofficial response was to go to it. The planned friendly in London went ahead — and that seems to imply that sport is not morally bankrupt after all. Au contraire, it seems to have a hefty credit at the bank of goodwill.

People just won't take the advice of the commentators and accept that sport has no meaning. The idea that liking sport is a grave error of metaphysics doesn't seem to be holding up. Philosophers can produce a million arguments to show us that sport is

appalling, futile, trivial, useless and worthless — but they can't stop the world loving the damn stuff.

And no, people don't love sport because it teaches us morals or because it brings us universal brotherhood and world peace. People love sport because it's fabulous, because it's joyous, because it's glorious and because it doesn't matter a toss.

Sport creates a living mythology of heroes and villains. The action can be thrill-

*The world's response
has been to fight terror with joy:
on, then, with the football match*

ing. Even if you have no taste for sport, you have to accept that people who push their own limits and sometimes the limits of human potential are doing something compelling.

It is socially acceptable to sneer at people who don't get art. I'd suggest that the failure to get sport is philistinism in another coat. You may have seen every piece of sculpture Michelangelo ever created, but if you can't still find beauty and meaning in the diving of Fu Mingxia or when Kohei Uchimura performs a kovacs on the high bar, you're doing something wrong.

Sport does beauty as a matter of course. It also provides an endless series of compelling narratives. Sport gives us the freedom to experience ridiculous delight and absurd disappointment in the sure and certain knowledge that even in defeat the sun will still rise the following morning.

Sport, in short, is about joy. It's a joy that can be fiercely personal or shared with millions. I was at the Olympic Stadium in London on that extraordinary Saturday night in 2012 when Britain won three athletics gold medals within an hour, thanks to Jessica Ennis, Greg Rutherford and Mo Farah, and I was a small part of a nation's joy.

Last week sport was attacked in Paris by the enemies of joy. A terrorist has but a single goal and that is terror, which makes sport an obvious soft target. The world's response has been to fight terror with joy: to fight the killers of sport with sport itself. On, then, with the football match.

Thus sport, for all its failings, and for all the horrible old men who run it, finds itself landed with the job of bringing good cheer to the world: but then that's what sport has always done. Sport can be awful enough, God knows, but that doesn't mean it isn't also a thing of joy. And it seems this week that it's the joy that endures.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

The French way of war

From 'The Example of France', The Spectator, 20 November 1915: France is an example to the world and to posterity of how a nation can bend itself to the work in hand, and labour with its whole body, its whole mind, and its whole soul. The more we know of the splendid details of this devotion the better. We think that we Englishmen know a good deal more of the ways of devotion than we are generally credited with, and we are learning daily in a geometrical progression. But even so, we cannot

fail to help ourselves by watching and admiring the wonderful performance of a people whose circumstances brought them more quickly and more really into contact with war than we ourselves were brought...

Beyond the rampart which we defend lie the barbarians yearning to advance. Every Frenchman and every Frenchwoman sees the horrible thing at a near view. That is why they all slave to rescue themselves and the world. As we have said, we are coming to see it, too, as

though it were at as close a range to ourselves. Let it not be thought that we are careless because we continually depreciate ourselves. Other nations have not this curious habit. But those who understand us best know that our posture of self-disparagement is not to be regarded too gravely. Not that we have not an infinitude of things yet to learn. But we are learning much because we have the will to learn; we shall certainly learn everything that France has to teach us by her most noble example.

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God's man in Baghdad

Exiled to Hampshire by Isis bombs, saintly Canon Andrew White itches to go back to the Middle East

MARY WAKEFIELD

Canon Andrew White, the vicar of Baghdad, is not, in person, at all as I'd imagined him. His memoir, about life as first a medic, then a cleric, is chock-a-block with famous friends. Pope John Paul II was a pal, the Grand Ayatollah of Baghdad, General David Petraeus. 'Oh, Andrew knows everyone,' I was told when I asked anyone about him, and I'm afraid my heart hardened. I arrived in the rain at his house in Liphook, Hampshire, preparing myself for a vain man, full of his own derring-do.

More fool me. Canon White is instantly, unusually lovable. He greets me wearing a sweatshirt with the caption 'Real men become vicars'. 'Look!' he says delightedly. 'Look at my hoodie!' We talk for close to two hours about Islam, Isis and evil, and his work as a mediator between the various hate-filled factions of the Middle East. By the time I leave it occurs to me that Canon Andrew White is something of a saint.

It's not that he's perfect, but that he's guileless. He's pure of heart in the way few people over five ever are. It makes sense that he's spent two decades as a peace-maker, negotiating with tyrants and psychopaths, because he's utterly disarming.

We sit in his study, which is arranged like a front room in the Middle East: seats around the walls. And on most of the seats, perched or lounging, is a young person, all employed by White's foundation (for relief and reconciliation in the Middle East). Throughout our interview they fuss over White, organise him, join in the conversation, which is interrupted from time to time by phone calls from a man called Des who has been given the job of finding for the Canon the perfect red suit-lining.

I say: 'I gather the Archbishop has recalled you. He's said it's not safe for you to stay in Baghdad?' Canon Andrew nods glumly, but he admits that his friend Justin Welby has a point. They worked together mediating in Nigeria, so the archbishop is not risk-averse. But Isis are now too dangerous. 'Isis are on the doorstep of Baghdad. Their bombs are going off all the time,' says White. Not least last Friday, when, before the Paris atrocity, a suicide bomber blew up 18 Shia Muslims. Has he ever been personally threatened? 'I invited an Isis man to dinner to talk once,' says White, 'But he

replied saying that if he came he would chop my head off.'

This sounds crude enough to be a bad joke. It wasn't. And if White had his head removed he wouldn't be the first member of his congregation to be assassinated by Isis.

I have looked through the Quran trying to find forgiveness... there isn't any. If you find it, tell me

St George's, White's church in Baghdad, once had a congregation of more than 6,000 and a school, a clinic and a food bank. This great community has been more than decimated by Isis. 'They killed over 1,000 of my congregation,' he says. 'Can you believe that? And now the others have fled, too.'

'It's not just Isis.' This from a girl who looks 15 but is 27-year-old Dr Sarah Ahmed, sitting in pyjamas on the sofa. She's White's

right-hand woman, a Muslim, still working in Iraq. She says: 'The truth is that the congregation came to hear Andrew — Christians and Muslims both — and now he's left, they've gone. There were 46 who came last Sunday. Forty-six!'

Muslims came to an Anglican church? 'People respect faith in Iraq,' says Sarah. 'They can see he is sincere.'

So is it better to be a Christian negotiating with Muslims than to be secular, I ask. I'm always hearing that religion is the problem, not the solution, in Iraq.

'Yes, absolutely,' says White. 'People say it's important to keep religion out of the peace process in the Middle East, but you can't have a peace process without religion. You can't have politics without religion in the Middle East! It's impossible. Faith is our common ground.'

How on earth do you reconcile factions



who think each other literally Satanic? 'You listen to their stories,' says Canon White. 'You get to know each person, love them. Perhaps you can persuade them to hear each other's stories. That way the conspiracy theories unravel.'

This isn't just talk. He's had great success. 'We signed that declaration up there,' he points at the wall proudly, 'That is the Chief Rabbi and Hamas saying, "We will work together and we recognise that the one thing we have in common is the belief in one God."'

Here we have a break for Canon White to talk to Des. The red lining is so vital, it turns out, because he is going to Jerusalem and he wants to take it to his tailor there. White is a lifelong Judaophile and clearly longs to be back in Israel.

You've met with Hamas and the PLO in your work as a mediator, I say. You were actually friends with Yasser Arafat. Is that difficult for a lover of Israel?

'Oh yes,' says White cheerfully, but adds that it actually causes problems with pro-Israel western Christians, not with Israelis. 'They say, "How can you deal with evil men? With these evil Muslims?" Well, I don't like the term evil Muslims. They are no more evil than Christians are. We haven't got a very good history either, have we?'

Equally, it's pro-Palestinian Christians, he says, who mind his friendship with Jews.

And Isis? Can you hear their stories? Will they hear yours? White's face falls. 'It's hard with them, because with Isis it is just about power. You see, these are Sunnis who felt that they had control once. Even under Saddam they had power and influence. And if you want power back, what do you do? You use force. If you can't win democratically, you blow people up.'

But they're so extreme, I say. All those civilians in Paris. All those children, and fellow Muslims. Aren't Isis unusually evil?

Here White is out of step with liberal opinion. He agrees absolutely that Isis are uniquely horrible, but he thinks the problem of talking to them comes from within the Quran itself.

'The trouble is a lack of forgiveness in Islam. I have looked through the Quran trying to find forgiveness... there isn't any. If you find it, tell me. This makes it very difficult to talk to Isis because they can show you quite clearly that it is what Allah wants. They can justify their position when Allah says you should combat and fight the infidel and they say, "Well, these are infidels." So the question is, how can you prove that these are not infidels? And you can't.'

So what's the answer, Canon White? Is it ground troops? In recent weeks he's been quoted calling for boots on the ground. He's a tough guy, for all his soft heart, and an admirer of the military.

But is he quite sure that as a man of

ANCIENT AND MODERN

The good life



Caligula made a joke out of it all. Suetonius wrote: 'He openly deplored the state of his times, because they had been marked by no public disasters: the rule of Augustus had been made famous by the massacre of Varus' three legions in Germany and that of Tiberius by the collapse of the amphitheatre at Fidenae. But the prosperity of his own times threatened his reign with oblivion!' So he occasionally expressed a wish for 'the destruction of his armies, for famine, plague, conflagrations, or a gigantic earthquake'.

The murderous emperor

to this world was one of brutal pessimism. Everyday proverbs, fables and sayings suggested that man was better not born at all, and second best was an early death; life was fragile, ruthless and short; all man could do was endure, making decisions in response to circumstances that would enable him at least to survive; only the lucky could expect happiness. None of this meant that personal grief was in any way less raw. Emotions were handled with traditional rituals and laments, communal and personal.

The depth of unreality into which the West's uniquely blessed condition is plunged is demonstrated by the only analogy endlessly invoked to describe the Parisian slaughter: it was like a movie. And it was in this respect: a movie made by Isis. — Peter Jones

peace, he wants war? As White begins to nod, Dr Sarah pipes up again from the sofa. She says: 'Andrew, come on. It will not help! Yes, maybe with violence they will make some temporary progress, but it will also fuel tensions.' She turns to me: 'If I am angry with Andrew and I hit him I feel better for two seconds but then he would hit me back and there is no end to it. No end.'

There's silence for a while. We both look at White. He says: 'I know what she says is right. War creates war and we have to find other ways round doing it. Even as a raving Tory like me, I have to say Sarah is right.'

It's the measure of the man that he listens and doesn't stick to his guns.

Both Dr Sarah and Canon White agree



'I'm incredibly tired and apt to make mistakes.'

on one thing: that however we combat them, Isis must not be underestimated. They've lived with Isis. They know.

Even now, post-Paris, the West is inclined to say: Oh, Isis are just idiots. If we grown-ups put any real effort into it they'd be easy to wipe out.

Not so, say Canon White and Dr Sarah. She tells a story about the way Isis captured a Yazidi village, which demonstrates unusual cunning: Isis first came to the village promising peace, she says. Then they said to the Yazidi: 'We're worried you'll fight us, so if you really want peace too, give up your guns.'

This the foolish Yazidi did. On their third visit Isis came and surrounded the now unarmed Yazidi. They took the women and girls as sex slaves and shot all the men, bar one who played dead under the corpse of his brother and survived to tell Sarah the tale.

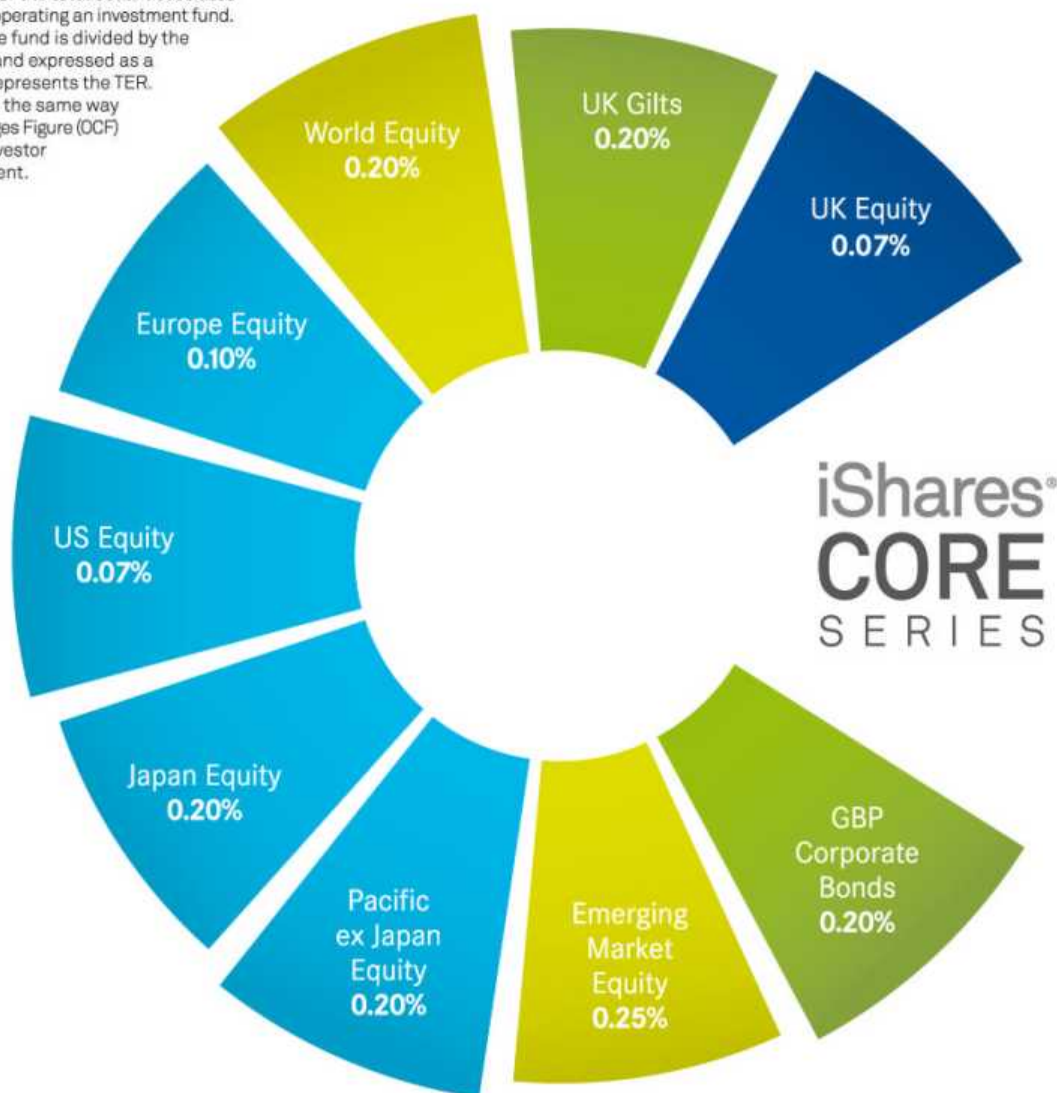
Clever Isis, tactical Isis.

So what can we do? 'We can hope,' says White, 'and we can pray.'

The wind blows. The phone goes. Des has finally found him the right red material to impress the Israelis. White is delighted. He seems itching to be off. 'Do you miss the Middle East when you're not there?'

'Oh yes!' he says, with a look outside at the grey and gusting November. 'I may no longer be the vicar of Baghdad, but the Middle East is home.'

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Legal cuts on trial

The disturbing case of Roger Khan – and the human cost of doing justice on the cheap

DAVID ROSE

The defendant, Roger Khan, was on trial for a vicious attack that left a man's skull shattered and his brain exposed to the elements, but he had no lawyer representing him in court. He was dyslexic and had no legal knowledge, but the judge had told him that, if he fired the legal-aid lawyers he no longer trusted, he would have to defend himself. In fact, the only legal advice he was getting came from the prosecution. Throughout the four-week trial, a junior Crown barrister went down to the cells each morning to advise him on how to conduct his defence – although naturally enough, the prosecution's aim was to get him convicted and sent to prison.

Even more strangely, some of those in court had been acquainted with each other long before the trial began. For example, one of the jurors knew the victim, the Newton Abbot restaurateur Nasim Ahmed, because she worked for his GP. (The juror was discharged at the end of the trial, but by then had been mixing with her peers for weeks.) She also knew other witnesses including Ahmed's estranged business partner, Faruk Ali, who has a criminal record for violence and bigamy: according to one witness at the trial, in the weeks before the attack Ali had been threatening to 'put a hit' on Ahmed, although this is denied by Ali.

Yet this trial did not take place in some backward dictatorship, but in England – before Judge Graham Cottle at Exeter Crown Court in July and August 2011. It ended when Khan, now 62, was convicted with his co-defendant, Faruk Ali's brother Abul. Khan was sentenced to 30 years – an exceptionally harsh term for attempted murder. He remains in Whitemoor prison in Cambridgeshire.

There is no disputing the savagery of the crime. Ahmed and Ali owned two Indian restaurants, one in Teignmouth, the other in Newton Abbot. A little before midnight on 27 October 2010, Ahmed returned home from work. Two men emerged from the shadows and set upon him. The night's takings, soaked in his blood, were left untouched.

This month, Khan's case is being considered by the Criminal Cases Review Commission, the statutory body that investigates miscarriages of justice and has the power to order an appeal. (He tried to appeal two years ago but, once again, had no lawyers.

A few days before the hearing, the London solicitor James Saunders agreed to act pro bono. Saunders had almost no time to prepare: the court turned Khan down.)

Acting for Khan now is Emily Bolton, the founder of a new legal charity, the Centre for Criminal Appeals. She previously founded and for four years ran Innocence Project New Orleans, which has freed no fewer than 26 innocent prisoners from the jails of America's Deep South. 'I'm stunned by the circumstances of Roger's conviction,' she says. 'British lawyers used to come to volunteer on death-row cases in Louisiana and tell me,

'Lawyers used to come to Louisiana and tell me such injustice could never happen in Britain. They were wrong'

"This sort of injustice could never happen in the British system." They were wrong.'

Cases like Khan's may well become more common, for its ultimate cause was a lack of funds for his defence. The reason why the judge ordered him to defend himself is that he had complained in pre-trial hearings about his solicitors, claiming they were not doing enough to prove his innocence. The first time he did this, the judge allowed him to switch to a different firm. But the problem persisted. Specifically, Khan said, they would not take the time to obtain or examine the hundreds of hours of CCTV footage shot in Newton Abbot on the night of the

attack. Somewhere there, he insisted, were the images that would prove his alibi – that while he had been in Newton Abbot, he had merely gone to the pub, and then, having missed the last train home to London, slept rough in a local park.

He wanted the court to appoint new lawyers who would get hold of the footage. But the judge refused, saying he could either stay with the lawyers he had or represent himself. 'I had no faith in them,' Khan told me in the bleak Whitemoor visiting room. 'I felt I had no choice but to do the job myself.'

As cuts to criminal legal aid have deepened, defence lawyers' resources have been constrained. 'Twenty years ago, in the brief I'd get for a serious case, I'd be sent a thick dossier,' says a leading criminal QC. 'It would contain numerous witness interviews done by defence solicitors, and all kinds of other goodies – the fruits of hundreds of hours of work. Nowadays, I'll get asked to defend a murder on the basis of an email with just the prosecution witness statements attached.'

As for Khan, he was eventually sent a package of 89 DVDs in his remand cell at Exeter prison a few weeks before the trial. Here it was at last: the CCTV footage. 'The only place I could view them was in the prison educational department,' he told me. 'Unfortunately I was only allowed there for one or two hours a day. Some of the disks were password protected, so I couldn't view them at all. Others seemed to have bits missing.'

Recent analysis of the DVDs by Bolton and her colleagues has found two sets of images of men near the area where the attack took place at relevant times, carrying what might be weapons. But they are muddy and indistinct. And these were only the municipal cameras – the disks in the pub cameras, which might have conclusively established Khan's innocence, had long been overwritten. There is little chance of finding a clear image of him now.

Other evidence that might have proved Khan's innocence is only now being properly investigated. There was no trace of his DNA on the metal pole used to smash Ahmed's skull, but there was DNA from someone else who has never been identified. The same goes for a jacket worn by one of the attackers, stained with the victim's blood.

Khan is not a poster boy – he is not, to



'There's a call for you to observe a year's silence.'

adapt a phrase used by criminologists, an 'ideal victim' of a miscarriage of justice. He was convicted in 1987 for armed robbery, although he protested his innocence of this crime, too, and the investigative journalist Paul Foot was preparing an article on the case at the time of his death. But if someone was trying to 'set him up', Khan's previous convictions made him more vulnerable, more plausible as a suspect, even though at the time of his arrest he had been straight for 15 years, working as a handyman and settled with a long-term partner.

Khan had never met Ahmed, nor his business partner Faruk. But his co-defendant Abul Ali, to whom he was related by marriage, lived near him in east London, and had asked him to share the driving on a trip to Devon. Unknown to Khan, Abul and his brother Faruk had accused Ahmed of sexually abusing another family member. According to witnesses at the trial, they were trying to extort thousands of pounds from him and force him to take a polygraph test.

Abul supported Khan's alibi, saying that after they reached Newton Abbot, he gave him the money for his train fare home, and Khan got out of the car. He said that afterwards two white men got in. He gave them £200: their role, apparently, was to 'persuade' Ahmed to take the polygraph.

It would have been a challenging case for a skilled QC. Small wonder Khan struggled. At one point he exclaimed: 'I am not really getting a fair trial, am I your honour? The odds seem to be packing up against me. One minute, one thing happens. The next min-

ute, another thing happens. I have no idea what is happening there. Then something else happens. I am supposed to sit here, take it, and everything is fine with everyone else, but I am the one going, the lamb that is going to the slaughter.'

On the days he gave his own evidence, he was on hunger strike, and was faint from the lack of food. The judge observed his poor condition, but said: 'I have already expressed my serious anxiety about this declining state of health, but I am not going to let this trial be held to ransom. We will get to the end of this case, one way or another.'

At Whitemoor, Khan described the meetings in the courtroom cells each day. 'Every morning it was either the police or one of the prosecuting barristers who came to see me. They seemed to want to know what I was going to ask the witnesses, and who I was going to call in my defence.' Sometimes, he claimed, they persuaded him not to challenge their own witnesses' veracity — warning that if he did, the jury would be told about his own previous convictions.

It has taken three years for Khan to reach the front of the long queue at the Criminal Cases Review Commission: with applications running at 1,500 a year, it has a gigantic backlog. If the commission does refer his case to the Court of Appeal, many more months will pass before it is heard.

'The human cost of trying to do justice on the cheap is innocent people losing years of their lives in prison,' Bolton says. 'In this Magna Carta anniversary year, we need to recognise that this is the modern meaning of an overmighty state.'

New Neighbour

The trellis between her garden and her new neighbour's garden is heavy with passion flower, honeysuckle and roses, so that only rare glimpses can be seen through it — a blue flower, a splash of grass, a dark cuff. She calls out politely to welcome him to the neighbourhood.

Weeks later, she calls out to him again and, slowly, emboldened by invisibility, she hears herself offering confidences — her fears, guilts and indecisions. It must be like a confessional, only sunnier and without penances. She thinks she hears him breathing attentively, but then there is the muffled sound of his back door closing.

—Connie Bensley

BAROMETER

Friendly words

England football fans sang 'La Marseillaise' in a friendly match at Wembley. The anthem has not always been so popular. In 1992 a Committee for a Marseillaise of Fraternity was founded to campaign for a change to the words, written as a war hymn by an army captain while French troops were besieged by Prussians at Strasbourg 200 years earlier. The campaign failed, despite the support of Danielle Mitterrand, wife of the then president. The suggested new lyrics began:

*Arise you children of the Motherland
Let's sing together for Liberty
Liberty, oh dearest liberty
Your bloody ramparts have fallen.*

The brothel demographic

Cynthia Payne, who was jailed for keeping a brothel where elderly men paid for sex with luncheon vouchers, died. There aren't many statistics on which age group uses prostitutes the most in Britain, but the US General Social Survey does have data on the ratio of men who report paying for sex to the number expected if paying for sex was practised equally among age groups.

Age group	Ratio
18-24	0.42
25-34	1.85
35-44	0.78
45-54	1.15
55-64	0.82
65+	0.32

Cop guns

It has been claimed that police in Britain would have trouble responding to a major terror incident because few are armed.

How armed are British police? In 2012/13: Officers authorised to use firearms **6,091**
Uses of armed response vehicles **13,116**
Incidents where use of firearms was authorised **10,996**
Incidents where firearms were used **3**

Room at the top

A Swiss architect is developing a design for double-decker trains on behalf of the Rail Safety and Standards Board. Double-decker trains have never taken off here because British railways have a small 'loading gauge'. Four-coach double-decker trains were used by British Rail on the Charing Cross to Dartford line in 1949, however. Two coupled together could seat 1,104 passengers, compared with 688 for modern trains. But station managers said it took too long to get passengers on and off, and passengers complained of cramped conditions and lack of ventilation, with one saying they had been 'kippered' in an upstairs smoking compartment.

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The anxiety industry

'Stress management' seems to be perpetually on the rise

LEO MCKINSTRY AND ANGELA PATMORE

W e seem to be in the grip of a terrible stress epidemic. According to a new study by the Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development, a professional body for managers in human resources, two fifths of all organisations stated that stress-related absence has increased. It even causes terrorism, apparently: the mother of Paris suicide bomber Ibrahim Abdeslam said she believes her son might have blown himself up because of stress.

The total number of cases of work-related stress, depression and anxiety in the past year was 440,000, according to the Health and Safety Executive, up from 428,000 cases two years earlier. So extensive is this plague that, in the HSE's view, stress accounts for no less than a third of all work-related ill-health cases. In practice, that translates into the loss of 10 million working days last year.

The problem seems particularly acute in the public sector. A *Guardian* survey of staff in the public and voluntary sectors, carried out this June by the *Guardian*, revealed that '93 per cent of respondents say they are stressed either all, some or a lot of the time'. And a study by the NASUWT union in March this year found 83 per cent of teachers had reported workplace stress. The Public and Commercial Services Union has claimed two-thirds of civil servants have 'suffered from ill health as result of stress at work'.

The spread of this epidemic has been accompanied by the creation of a vast stress-management industry, made up of counselors, therapists, trainers, health workers and life coaches, many of whose activities are entirely unregulated. At the last count, there were some 15 million websites offering such services. Among the methods used supposedly to tackle stress are transcendental meditation, flotation tanks, breathing techniques, massage sessions, mindfulness teaching, Zumba classes, dough balls, and 'mood cards'.

Some interventions are medical. NHS statistics show that last year, 53 million packs of antidepressants were dispensed. The use of heavy-duty drugs like mirtazapine, diazepam, venlafaxine and sertraline all increased, the last by a staggering 29 per cent.

The paradox is that the more our society dishes out the antidepressants and dough balls, the less able we seem to be at handling stress. This might be because the stress-management industry has a vested

interest in keeping stress levels high. At any rate, it appears to worsen what it purports to solve.

But what is stress, really? The definition is so vague as to be almost meaningless. It now encompasses almost any heightened feeling, from weariness to alarm, from anger to nervousness. Based on the idea that the natural state is calmness, the concept of stress promotes the idea that any strong emotion must be physically or psychologically harmful.

This lack of definition has arisen because the scientist who invented the idea had a poor command of English. Hans Selye, an endocrinologist from Hungary, studied the reactions of rats' bodies to demands placed upon them in his laboratory, and in 1936 he appropriated the term 'stress' from the world of physics. In that field, stress meant something very specif-

ic, referring to the magnitude of an external force which produces a proportional amount of deformation — or strain — in an elastic object. Selye should have spoken of 'strain'. But the imprecision of his terminology, which gained widespread currency through his 1956 book *The Stress of Life*, opened the way to the stress hysteria that we see today. There is an old saying that to a man with a hammer, everything looks like a nail. Today, in the world of therapy and Zumba classes, every emotion looks like stress.

Yet it defies history and common sense to pretend that workplace stress is increasing. Most of us enjoy shorter hours, better pay, longer holidays, greater security and higher living standards than Britons of the past. In place of manual labour and heavy industry, we tend to work in comfortable surroundings.

Far from helping anyone, the stress fad is profoundly dangerous. It creates a climate of resignation and fear in the workplace. The medicalisation of emotion encourages an attitude of 'learned helplessness', and encourages some to feel that work is actually damaging their health, when all research shows the opposite.

Falsely described as stress, intensity of feeling is a biological impulse that enables us to cope with the challenges that are unavoidable in work and life. It should be welcomed as a vital part of the human condition.



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How to lose a debate at the Oxford Union



The way not to win a debate at the Oxford Union, I've just discovered, is to start your speech with a casual quip about Aids. It wasn't a scripted joke. Just one of those things you blurt out in those terrifying initial moments when you're trying to win the audience over with your japeish, irreverent, mildly self-parodying human side before launching into your argument proper.

It only happened because when my turn came to speak there wasn't any still water for me to drink and I was parched. So various Union officers proffered me the dregs of the other speakers' half-drunk bottles. 'Oh my God, I might get Aids,' I ad-libbed, to no general amusement whatsoever. From that moment things only went from bad to H.M. Bateman.

First it was just the odd groan and hiss of disapproval. But the longer I went on, the more it became clear that even the more tasteful, light and apolitical jokes I'd prepared were going down with the crowd like a cauldron of cold sick. As for my more trenchant offerings — on 'cis gender'; on feminazis; on the ludicrousness of 'safe spaces', etc — well if I'd just barbecued a kitten and offered round titbits to taste I doubt I'd have got a much less enthusiastic response. We lost the debate by an enormous margin.

Afterwards, the Union's charming Aussie president explained where I'd gone wrong. 'You were lost from the moment you joked about Aids,' he said. 'Really?' I said. 'Really,' he confirmed. 'Cis gender, too. You can never joke about that,' said one of his mates, sotto voce, glancing nervously over his shoulder. 'Even saying the word makes me uncomfortable. You don't know who's listening.'

And the depressing thing is, they meant it. Of course, I should have known this from Brendan O'Neill's heartfelt piece last year about Oxford's mirthless, free-speech-averse Stepford Students. But until you've experienced it for yourself, you're inclined to dismiss this stuff as journalistic licence. 'Surely the place can't have changed that much since I was here?' you think.

It has, though. It's like *The Walking Dead*. Especially in Wadham, apparently, where

pretty much the entire college has been infected. (But then, Wadham, eh? Home of Terry Eagleton, the man who, in the only lecture I ever attended, told me it was just as valid to deconstruct the telephone directory as it was to read *Shakespeare*.) 'Actually there probably aren't all that many of them but their influence is disproportionate to their numbers,' another undergraduate explained. 'They're so shrill and angry and difficult that everyone censors themselves just to avoid attracting their attention.'

Of course, you could argue, the lefty loons have always been with us. In my day, every college JCR was desperate to support the miners and rename its bar the Mandela room. But this time feels different — for a

If I could do my turn again, I'd go in much harder. There'd be no attempts to ingratiate myself with the students

number of reasons. One is the cowardice — or, worse, eager acquiescence — of the authorities in the face of this pressure. When, last year, student activists sought to close down a Christ Church debate on abortion because the speakers were men (and therefore unqualified to talk about women's experience), it was the college's administrators — the censors — who actually cancelled the event in the name of sparing 'residents' 'unnecessary distress'.

Another is the fanatical cry-bully solipsism of the activists. One of the arguments



'On the internet, nobody knows you're GCHQ.'

used in a (happily unsuccessful) attempt earlier this year to ban sub fusc (the formal clothing you wear for exams) was that being of medieval origin, it was inherently sexist and likely to put women at a disadvantage by making them feel excluded and uncomfortable. Such loons have probably always been with us but, thanks to the internet, their weird minority views now seem to them normal, and thanks to social media they have the power to spread a virus which might once have been contained within their lonely student digs.

But definitely the worst aspect of this navel-gazing obsession with trivia like 'transgendered' people, 'safe spaces' and (nonexistent) 'rape culture' is the crushing effect it has had on freedom of expression. Quite the most important thing I learned in my time at Oxford is that, just so long as you can eloquently marshal sufficient evidence to support your case, you can argue any damn thing you want. Not only is it intellectually liberating but, as Milton argued in *Areopagitica*, it's how we learn to differentiate good ideas from bad ideas: by testing them in the crucible of debate.

For my undergraduate generation — and I suspect for all those before mine — this was a given. Which is why when I opposed the motion 'This house would break up media empires in defence of democracy', it just didn't occur to me till it was too late that it wouldn't be enough merely to point out how illiberal and authoritarian it was; that first, I'd actually have to spell out why illiberal and authoritarian were bad and why free speech is preferable.

If I could do my turn all over again last Thursday, I'd go in much harder. There'd be no lame jokes or flip asides, no doomed attempts to ingratiate myself with kids mostly so brainwashed that all one of the left-wing speakers had to do to elicit a roar of smug consensual laughter was to utter the words 'Fox News'. Instead, with weary patience I'd explain how the moment we lose sight of why 'free speech' matters is the moment we surrender the keys to the enemy at the gates. I would still have lost the debate. But the next evening there would have been those events in Paris...



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The NHS and politicians

Sir: The NHS is indeed in need of fundamental reform, but Max Pemberton's excellent article ('The wrong cuts', 14 November) exemplifies why politicians are least well qualified to conduct it. The public loves the NHS and has every reason to distrust political meddling. NHS England should become a public corporation with a five-year charter similar to that applying to the BBC. Of course politicians must decide the total budget and agree the strategic goals, but that is a far cry from deciding the pay and hours of every category of staff. Politicians have no managerial skills and should leave that to the professionals.

Tim Ambler

Cley next the Sea, Norfolk

What the young resent

Sir: I am a pensioner, but in my experience any resentment from the young ('The war on pensioners', 14 November) is directed less at our financial situation than at the increasingly difficult position they are put in by the housing market and the actions of successive governments. Those starting their working lives encounter a crippling financial burden, largely caused by three factors: 1) Starter house prices approach six times starter incomes, rather than around three times income 30 to 40 years ago. 2) At the time I entered the housing market, mortgage interest was tax-deductible at one's marginal rate. 3) University tuition fees used to be paid by central or local government, and means-tested maintenance grants were available.

It is no wonder that it takes families the majority of their working lives to pay off these debts. There are many ways an enlightened government could alleviate this situation, but sadly we do not seem to be living in an age of enlightenment.

Mike Venis

Faversham, Kent

No friends of Dorothy

Sir: *The Spectator* evidently needs some gay men on its staff. The glorious Technicolor photograph (Arts, 14 November) shows Judy Garland not in 1944's *Meet Me in St Louis*, but in the lesser-known *The Pirate* (1948), which had a score by Cole Porter.

Mark Bostridge

London NW3

Livingstone's philistinism

Sir: I was strangely troubled to read Alexander Chancellor's commentary on the growing destructive bent of some city

mayors (Long Life, 7 November). For Ken Livingstone, as mayor, to have called for the removal of the statues of Generals Sir Charles Napier and Sir Henry Havelock in Trafalgar Square because they were 'outdated symbols' and 'he didn't know who they were' put him in a similar camp to the radicals who destroyed Palmyra.

Napier will always be remembered for his notable despatch back to headquarters on conquering the Sindh Province in 1842: '*Peccavi*', Latin for 'I have sinned'. Although brutal in punishment, he endeared himself in India by furthering the cause of native officers, and various streets and buildings in Karachi and Quetta are still named after him. Henry Havelock gave his life defending Lucknow during the 1857 rebellion — a lasting example to officers and men following after him.

For Livingstone to have complained that 'the people on the plinths in the main square of our capital city should be identifiable to the generality of the population' is simply nonsense. These monuments bring history to life.

Tazi Husain

Chairman, Tempsford Memorial Trust, Bedford

Boarding school 'extras'

Sir: I was tickled by Charles Moore's musings on the 'extras' on boarding school termly bills (Notes, 24 October). When I was a housemaster, I was contacted by a Nigerian father expressing outrage at the £1,200 bill for extras that his son had racked up. We amicably resolved the matter when I pointed out that his entrepreneurial son had been buying items in bulk from the tuck shop as 'extras' during opening hours, and selling them on at a profit during closing hours to aid his cash flow.

Andrew Wilson

Eaglescliffe, Teesside

Our very own brain drain

Sir: It is hard to disagree with Will Butler-Adams's *cri de coeur* in your excellent supplement on manufacturing ('Let's step it up a gear', 7 November). But while he is being outbid for graduate talent by the likes of Dyson and Jaguar Land Rover, they in turn are being outbid by the financial services industry.

So long as investment banks and hedge funds continue to pay salaries that dwarf those available in manufacturing, the brightest and best engineers, physicists and mathematicians will flock to the Square Mile, where they will devote themselves to the questionable discipline of financial engineering.

As a country, we cannot have our cake and eat it. It was, after all, Winston Churchill who remarked that he would rather see industry a little more content and finance a little less proud. Much financial activity might indeed be socially useless, but as a nation it seems to be one of the things we are rather good at.

Andrew Mitchell

London W4

Bowling is brilliant

Sir: Mark Mason's book review (7 November) perpetuates the outdated misconception that crown green bowling is an old person's game. It is true that the majority are retired — then again, the same goes for golf. But the beauty is that anyone, from young children upwards, can play, and they do, in all weathers. It is sociable, competitive and reasonably inexpensive to play; a set of two bowls will usually outlive the owner and are passed on through the generations. Once they've got the bug, most people are committed for life — me included, having started in my early twenties.

Roger Molineux

Macclesfield, Cheshire

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The view from my Belfast bus: tribalism as the enemy of prosperity



Titanic efforts

At Stormont on Saturday, we observed a minute's silence for the dead of Paris. Our conference group of Brits and Americans had convened two days earlier to discuss conflict resolution, the idea that nationalism and tribalism are the enemies of peace and prosperity, and how all this might relate to the migration crisis; so the moment could not have been more poignant. We had reached the seat of the Northern Ireland Assembly by way of a bus tour that was a potted history of the Troubles: up the Catholic Falls Road, through a gate in the 'peace wall', back down the Protestant Shankill Road and across Loyalist East Belfast; onwards through leafy suburbia to the government estate with its elevated view across a huddled city where very little, it seemed, has been forgiven or forgotten.

Murals of masked gunmen still adorn the gable ends. The graffito 'Stick Haass up your arse' was a reminder to our American friends of how US diplomat Richard Haass was received when he tried to broker agreement on 'parades and flags' a couple of years ago. Our Stormont host, a deputy speaker of the Assembly, apologised that none of his senior colleagues could join us because the leaders of the province's five main parties were locked in talks, with British and Irish officials, over 'legacy' issues, continuing paramilitary activity and welfare cuts.

Evidently all points are sore in talks that have already dragged on for weeks. But in a region where the public sector accounts for more than 60 per cent of the economy, and youth unemployment stands 40 per cent higher than the UK average, the prospect of Westminster-imposed cuts to match those on this side of the water is a particular provocation. Sinn Féin's Martin McGuinness has declared them a threat to the fragile power-sharing and devolution arrangements currently in place. 'An unsung hero of the peace process has been the British taxpayer,' one long-time observer told us, and there's a fear — despite decades of community-building by local unsung heroes — that if the money tap is turned off, violence will return.

So it was a consolation to visit one part of Belfast where entrepreneurship (albeit catalysed by grant funding and tax incentives) is creating a genuine sense of looking forward rather than back. This is the Titanic Quarter, occupying much of what was once the world-leading Harland & Wolff shipyard where the great liner was launched in 1911.

The yard itself still operates, on a reduced scale, as a repairer of ships and oil rigs. But here, beside the drawing office where Thomas Andrews sketched *Titanic's* ill-fated structure of not-so-watertight compartments, stands the shiny £97 million Titanic Belfast tourist attraction, the film studio where *Game of Thrones* is made, and a large new block occupied by Citigroup, the US banking giant.

Most importantly, here is the Northern Ireland Science Park, developing specialisms in cybersecurity and the super-hot 'fintech' sector I wrote about last week, and incubating start-ups such as See.Sense, which makes intelligent bike lights that transmit traffic data, and Write to Read, an app (invented by a remarkable 17-year-old, Gareth Reid) that reshapes typefaces to make them more legible for dyslexics.

Such micro-businesses, briefly described, can sound relatively insignificant: but what could be more insignificant, in relation to things that really matter, than an argument over parades and flags and ancient fights that has impeded economic progress for two generations? Conflict — I conclude after one wet day in Belfast — is most effectively diminished by prosperity. And while governments often get their blueprints as wrong as Thomas Andrews did, prosperity is always best nurtured by entrepreneurs, who by definition start small. The future is theirs.

A fine clip

Our conference began and ended in Dublin. As ever in recent visits, I came away with an upbeat impression — amplified this

time by a downbeat experience of Belfast. The economy is 'moving along at a fine clip', as the *Irish Times* put it, with the number of people in work up by 130,000 to almost 2 million since post-crash unemployment peaked; Sunday's switching on of Christmas lights in Grafton Street illuminated a 5 per cent rise in retail sales since last year. The property market is buoyant (no talk of overheating, but I was worried by Bank of Ireland billboards offering big mortgages with '2 per cent cashback') and new car sales up by no less than 31 per cent — contributing to a statistic I can confirm, that Dublin traffic congestion has returned to 2008 levels. The airport, whose glossy new terminal was condemned as expensive folly when it opened in 2010, is also buzzing, and is a Babel of European languages.

The Irish love being part of Europe. Of course they have benefited from Brussels' largesse, but they have also played a smarter game than other small members during the recession by keeping tax rates low enough to attract continuing flows of inward investment from the US and elsewhere: 'Apple creates 1,000 new jobs in Cork' was one headline this week, and more striking as an indicator of change, 'Galway's Indian community celebrates Diwali'.

What's more, the Irish have never regretted joining the euro, despite the excesses to which it tempted them. And they remain a huge trading partner for the UK. Ireland buys more of our goods and services than China does, and five times more than we sell to India — whose prime minister Modi was being so assiduously buttered up for bigger orders during his London visit. The UK is Ireland's second-largest export customer after the US. So the Irish are mustard keen that we don't vote for Brexit — and indeed find it incomprehensible, from their own experience, that we might contemplate doing so. The message was whispered in my ear repeatedly this weekend. 'They would say that, wouldn't they?' will be the Outers' instant response, but perhaps we should listen a little more carefully.

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BOOKS & ARTS

Alan West reveals that building a nuclear submarine is more complex than putting a man on the moon

Tim Martin laughs himself sick over Richard Dawkins getting stuck in the snow

William Cook wonders whether Tintin, the intrepid reporter, ever filed a single story

Ursula Buchan delights in stacking logs the Norwegian way

Damian Thompson accuses Brahms of composing 35 of the most miserable minutes in music

Jack Wakefield isn't surprised that Thomas Heatherwick's designs are so popular with states built on slave labour

Lloyd Evans finds the set in Kenneth Branagh's *The Winter's Tale* heartbreaking



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'Annie', 1864, by Julia Margaret Cameron, Martin Gayford — p58

CHRISTMAS BOOKS II



Books of the Year

A further selection of the best and most overrated books of 2015, chosen by our regular reviewers

Daniel Hahn

I suspect many people won't bother to read Katherine Rundell's *The Wolf Wilder* (Bloomsbury, £12.99) because it's a children's book. Don't be one of those people. You'd be depriving yourself of a ferociously paced, brilliantly imagined piece of gorgeous, immersive storytelling — and really, why would you want to do that? Set in Russia a century ago, it's the story of a girl and her friends (some of whom are wolves) forced to be brave, and to right some great wrongs.

We began 2015 with the introduction to another bright new talent, following the publication of *The Vegetarian* by Han Kang (Portobello, £12.99), superbly translated by Deborah Smith. Set in contemporary Korea, it's an irresistibly weird and sensuous story of betrayals, transformation, flesh, domestic and social taboos, family responsibility and sex. This one is not for children. But read it anyway.

Christopher Howse

Two biographies that changed my mind. Gerard Kilroy's *Edmund Campion: A Scholarly Life* (Ashgate, £80) vividly sketches the intellectual worlds of Oxford and Prague in the first half of Queen Elizabeth's reign. They were not as cut off from each other as we might suppose. Campion, one of the men who connected the two, dominated his time with impressive composure, even as he suf-

fered appalling treatment. Too late for last year's best books was *The Great Reformer: Francis and the Making of a Radical Pope* by Austen Ivereigh (Allen & Unwin, £20), which shows why Pope Francis is not a silly old commie. The author's insights into his Argentine background and hard spiritual road make sense of his rejection of the trappings of power and intellectual elitism. I now like Campion and Francis much more than I did.

Marcus Berkmann

Nothing makes me happier than a perfectly pitched comic novel, and this year I chanced upon two. Kate Clanchy's *Meeting the English* (Picador, £16.99) introduces a young Scottish Candide into upper-middle-class arty north London, where his goodness and common sense are buffeted by the blinding self-absorption of the other characters. This is social comedy so warming and nutritious, so fresh and elegantly executed, it comes as rather a surprise to learn that this is Clanchy's first novel. It's probably not compulsory to live in north London to enjoy it, although I have to admit I have given it as a present to several friends who are inclined to regard Hampstead Heath as the centre of the universe.

Antoine Laurain's *The President's Hat* (Gallic, £8.99) is more whimsical but still an exercise in precise judgement. In the mid-1980s, President Mitterrand eats lunch in a Paris brasserie with a couple of associates

and then leaves his hat behind. A man picks it up, puts it on and his luck begins to change for the better. Then he loses it, but someone else picks it up and puts it on, and so on and so forth. It's a fantasy, but a delightful one, edged with satire, avoiding cutesiness, with a Jeevesian eyebrow raised throughout.

Jane Ridley

William Waldegrave's *A Different Kind of Weather: A Memoir* (Constable, £20). By contrast with most political autobiographies, this is refreshingly and engagingly candid. Waldegrave explores the nature of political ambition — the narcotic of being at the centre of the storm and the creeping self-doubt that undermines the confidence you need to reach the very top. I found it perceptive and original. Good on his old girlfriends too.

A.J. Balfour was another Tory intellectual in politics, but none of his biographers have ever quite managed to crack his combination of ruthlessness with a charm that contemporaries found irresistible. The American academic Nancy W. Ellenberger is a cultural historian and the author of a couple of groundbreaking articles dissecting the social anthropology and the interior landscapes of Balfour's clique, the Souls. So I eagerly picked up her *Balfour's World* (Boydell Press, £30). It's full of interest and new material. But somehow cultural history doesn't quite work as biography. The definitive life of Balfour remains to be written.

Sara Wheeler

My Book of the Year is *Between You & Me: Confessions of a Comma Queen*, a grammar memoir by Mary Norris, a copy editor at the *New Yorker* for 30 years (Norton, £15.99). Anyone who loves language will wallow in this book. Working with the greats (Roth to McPhee) and digressing on the foibles of the serial comma, Norris infects every line with wit and wisdom.

In the travel department I commend *Elephant Complex: Travels in Sri Lanka* by John Gimlette (Quercus, £25), a gripping account of an under-reported island.

As for fiction, I pick John Banville's *The Blue Guitar* (Viking, £14.99) — perhaps for the tone of elegiac melancholy as the protagonist faces the sorrows and indignities of late middle-age.

Craig Raine

You remember those aircraft carriers in the *Eagle* with a section cut away so you could see the innards? Antony Sher's insider journal *Year of the Fat Knight: The Falstaff Diaries* (Nick Hern Books, £16.99) is a brilliant exploded view of a great actor at work — modest and gifted, self-centred and selfless — a genius capable of transporting us backstage, where the cast take their weapons from the sword rack while the stage-manager is knitting and the faces of the stage crew are underlit by their iPhones.

Single, Carefree, Mellow is a unified collection of short stories by Katherine Heiny (Fourth Estate, £12.99) — hilarious and true, hilarious because true. It takes nerve, these days, to imply that adultery isn't an exclusively male activity. Here is a typical opening sentence: 'You always think of him as Mr Eagleton, even after you start to sleep with him.' The next sentence of this story (about a 17-year-old sleeping with her teacher) unloads its comic surprise: 'You always call him that, too.' A terrific debut.

Graham Robb

Robert Seethaler's bestselling novel, *Ein ganzes Leben*, translated by Charlotte Collins as *A Whole Life* (Picador, £12.99) is the unaccountably gripping story of a half-crippled, simple-minded orphan in the Austrian Alps scraping a living from a stony field and slaving for a cable-car construction firm. It takes barely two hours to read it but would take a lifetime to forget.

Some biographies are worth reading however slight one's prior interest in the subject. I particularly enjoyed Robert Douglas-Fairhurst's sensitive, canny and erudite biography of Charles Dodgson and Alice Liddell, *The Story of Alice: Lewis Carroll and the Secret History of Wonderland* (Harvill Secker, £25). *John Aubrey: My Own Life* (Chatto & Windus, £25) is Ruth

Scurr's bold and imaginative recreation of the diary of the 17th-century antiquary. It shows how close a scrupulous and unselfregarding biographer can come to the savour of a life.

Martin Gayford

Michael Jacobs's *Everything is Happening* (Granta £15.99) — a mixture of autobiography, travel narrative and reflections on a Velazquez masterpiece, 'Las Meninas' — is a work of charm and quirky originality. The author died leaving the project only half completed, which makes it both tantalising and poignant. His friend Ed Vulliamy rounds out the text with a memoir.

You are also liable to feel a pang while turning the handsomely illustrated pages of *Damascus Tiles* by Arthur Millner (Prestel, £60). It is full of images — flowers and fruit in turquoise and blue (below) — fit for a paradise garden. But some of these ceramics, and the buildings they decorated in Aleppo and elsewhere, no longer exist.



No one is in a better position to write *Frank Auerbach: Speaking and Painting* (Thames & Hudson, £19.95) than Catherine Lampert, since she has been posing for the subject once a week since the late 1970s. This is a subtle and intimate portrait of the artist.

Philip Marsden

Max Porter's *Grief is the Thing with Feathers* (Faber, £10) was one of the most surprising books this year, full of vitality and freshness — which are odd merits perhaps for a story involving a dead spouse and a pastiche of Ted Hughes's *Crow*. Part prose and part verse, the drama of a father and sons coping with loss and an outsize corvid in the house is comic, moving and ultimately uplifting.

The blind-deaf poet Jack Clemon — who died in 1994 — also received a literary resurrection this year with the publication of his

Selected Poems (Enitharmon Press, £9.99). Growing up in Cornwall's weird white-china-clay country, his verse transformed the experience of his failing senses into a savage and devastating vision of our post-industrial world.

With his fourth book about topography and the imagination, *Landmarks* (Hamish Hamilton, £20), Robert Macfarlane again piles on the pleasure, sending us reaching for muddy coats and boots with the layered beauty of his prose, the diligence of his research and the glittering clarity of his ideas.

Hilary Spurling

My first choice is Rachel Billington's *Glory: A Story of Gallipoli* (Orion Books, £19.99), following three young survivors (and their families at home) through what became the first great British defeat of the first world war. Grim and gripping, difficult to put down. My second is an old favourite reissued this year in paperback, Anthony Powell's uproarious *From a View to a Death* (Arrow Books, £8.99), a novel about dysfunctional marriage, still as relevant and funny as the day it came out over 70 years ago. An extraordinary book for a young man in his mid-twenties to write about the marital problems of middle-aged people, ending with the outing of the retired major up at the big house, who likes to relax while smoking his pipe behind locked doors in a flowery Ascot hat and lady's evening gown.

Clare Mulley

The books I have most enjoyed this year are Sophie De Schaepdrijver's *Gabrielle Petit: The Death and Life of a Female Spy in the First World War* (Bloomsbury, £19.99), Thomas Harding's *The House by the Lake: A Story of Germany* (Heinemann, £20) and Saul David's *Operation Thunderbolt: Flight 139 and the Raid on Entebbe Airport* (Hodder & Stoughton, £20).

Nicky Haslam

Joseph Roth's *The Hotel Years* (Granta, £16.99), seamlessly translated by Michael Hofmann, is a sentimental yet trenchant journey through places and events in Europe's interwar *neiges d'antin*. Even the map of the cities Roth roamed gives one goosebumps of nostalgia. And bang in its middle there's Berlin, from where much of Thomas Harding's haunting *The House by the Lake* sends out its ill-auguring arteries. This is as vivid an evocation of Germany in that period as Sybille Bedford's *A Legacy* is of the previous century.

Outside that then-poison-fuelled capital is Potsdam, where the founding father

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of Prussian autocracy built the prettiest of palaces and picked the loftiest of guardsmen, freshly and fascinatingly described by Tim Blanning in *Frederick the Great* (Allen Lane, £30).

Lloyd Grossman's *Benjamin West and the Struggle to be Modern* (Merrell, £35) is a flawlessly written, illustrated and produced study of that mercurial American painter. I've so far only dipped into *The Maisky Diaries*, edited by Gabriel Gorodetsky (Yale, £25). As that popular Soviet envoy's revelations are on everyone's lips now, they will be the choice of historians much worthier than me to comment on.

Allan Massie

Francis King more than once suggested in his *Spectator* books of the year contribution that it was time Andreï Makine was given the Nobel Prize. This still hasn't happened. His latest novel *A Woman Loved* (MacLehose, £16.99), beautifully translated by Geoffrey Strachan, reminds us that Francis was right. This novel about a filmmaker writing, and trying to make, a film about Catherine the Great, first under the supervision of Soviet censors and then in the mad days of the Yeltsin presidency when the oligarchs ran wild and became precariously rich, is one of his best. And that's very high praise.

In *Dictator* Robert Harris brings his trilogy on Cicero to a triumphant end (Hutchinson, £20). As one who has himself written novels set in the last years of the Roman republic and the first century of empire, I am happy to say that Harris reigns supreme. His Cicero is magnificent: couldn't conceivably be done better.

For anyone still enthused by rugby I would recommend Tom English's marvellous *No Borders* (Arena Sport, £19.99), an oral history of Irish rugby. It is — Ireland being Ireland — admirably about more than rugby too, the sport being one of the few things that unites the Republic and Ulster, transcending partition, though not without tensions and danger.

Stephen Bayley

Architectural books are too often brainless hagiography or wince-making, fashion-conscious publicity truffling, or dull, dull, dull technical or historical tomes. So it is good to recommend three very different exceptions.

Karl Lagerfeld, creative director of Chanel, has a reasonable claim to be one of the strangest people alive. He is also a noted bibliophile and architecture amateur. Now he has published a book called *Casa Malaparte* (Steidl, £28), about the house the mad fascist novelist-adventurer Curzio Malaparte built for himself on Capri. Malaparte was a pseudonym and a play on Bonaparte, suggestive of both wicked-

ness and grandeur. His house is dramatic, uncompromised, inaccessible and shockingly beautiful. Godard used it in *Le Mépris*. For those unwilling to hike over mountainous scrub, this is an alternative.

There's no gainsaying Le Corbusier's humane genius in my view, but it is amusing to find a provocative, revisionist take-down. This is Xavier de Jarcy's *Le Corbusier: Un fascisme français* (Albin Michel, £12.75). No one ever doubted Corb's inclination to tyranny — architects are always a bit that way — but in the year of the 50th anniversary of his death, when the Centre Pompidou exhibition refuses even to discuss it, de Jarcy's journalistic muckraking will require future historians to reconsider uncomfortable truths.

Osbert Lancaster is now forgotten or ignored as most architectural commentary adopts noisy radical 'positions'. Three facsimile volumes of his gentle, witty, erudite illustrated commentaries have been re-issued in a slip-case as *Cartoons, Columns and Curlicues* (Pimpernel Press, £40). *Pillar to Post* (1938), *Homes Sweet Homes* (1939), and *Draynefleete Revealed* (1948) reveal an engaged, eclectic, humorous mind a world away from the tantrums of Zaha or the annoying angles of Koolhaas. Delicious.



Lord Littlehampton's Folly
(From *Draynefleete Revealed*)

David Crane

A year late — but it's a great slab of a book — and I've only recently caught up with Robert Tombs's terrific *The English and their History* (Penguin, £14.99). There's not a page that doesn't throw up something interesting and often surprising, though it does leave one with one small nagging worry: if we — the English — are so patently a good thing, why did the whole planet take such

huge pleasure in seeing us knocked out of the Rugby World Cup?

One partial clue might lie in Raghu Karnad's *Farthest Field* (William Collins, £18.99), a brilliant tale of an Indian family caught up in the chaos of the second world war. It's a work of great generosity and imaginative power, but it does again leave one with the uneasy thought that our finest hour was not quite so fine if you happened to be part of our disintegrating empire in the east.

I'm very much looking forward to the third volume of Robert Harris's Cicero trilogy, *Dictator*.

Molly Guinness

Oliver Sacks's autobiography *On the Move* (Picador, £20) is full of surprising details — for example, the eminent neurologist was a weightlifting champion in his youth who hung out with Hells Angels. Sacks — who died in August — was an inspiring person with an extraordinary breadth of interests and enthusiasms. I also enjoyed Anne Tyler's family portrait *A Spool of Blue Thread* (Vintage, £7.99). People have criticised Tyler for being too gentle, but actually she has the rapier wit of a true satirist. You know exactly how awful one character is because she has soft shoes and insists on calling her mother-in-law Mother Whitshank.

Monsters by Emerald Fennell (Hot Key Books, £7.99) is absolutely great. It's about two appalling children, a sinister seaside holiday and a spate of murders. It's gripping and astonishingly, gleefully dark.

This year everyone seems to be mad about Elena Ferrante's Neapolitan novels. I disliked the narrator and her unlikely emotions, but worse still, the author sets up a mystery at the beginning and then never bothers to give a satisfactory explanation: totally unacceptable.

Frances Wilson

Elena Ferrante, of course. Were there any other books this year? Ferrante's Neapolitan novels, whose fourth and final instalment, *The Story of the Lost Child* translated by Ann Goldstein (Europa Editions, £11.99), appeared in September, have achieved the seemingly impossible: a cool-handed dissection of the dynamics of female friendship. No other writer has described so well the feral nature of the bond, how the best friend is a figure of both fascination and fear, and the strongest friendships are the most dangerous, being built on what Ferrante calls 'dissolving boundaries'. Her flat, affectless prose and rolling narrative have a hypnotic quality: reading the Neapolitan novels is not like reading at all. Compared to Ferrante's effortless magic, Karl Ove Knausgaard's still unfolding 'autofictional' epic *My Struggle* (Book 4, translated by Don Bartlett, was published by Archipelago books this April)

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feel overwrought and boastful, the hype around them amounting to much ado about nothing.

Charlotte Moore

Vanessa Nicolson's *Have You Been Good?* (Granta, £16.99) turns a personal archive — tickets, receipts and cigarette ends, as well as the usual diaries and letters — into a collage of painful experience. Her homosexual father Ben and impossible-to-please mother Luisa parted when Vanessa was small. 'We have got to resign ourselves to the necessity of damaging her,' said Ben, and this memoir is a testament to that damage. Interwoven with vivid scenes from her lonely childhood and wild adolescence is the story of her own daughter, Rosa, who drowned aged 19. I've rarely read anything more agonising than the description of Rosa's last hours, but the book is also full of vigorous humour and sharp social comment.

Jane Hervey's *Vain Shadow* (Persephone, £14) written in the early 1950s, lay in a drawer for ten years. Eventually published in 1963, it received little attention. Now this funny, tightly constructed novel of a landed family on the brink of implosion after the funeral of their patriarch has been rescued by Persephone, and should be gratefully received by every book group in the land.

Philip Hensher

The best non-fiction of the year covered the political spectrum. Owen Hatherley's *Landscapes of Communism* (Allen Lane, £25) hit my soft spot for East European townscapes, and sent me off on a charming holiday, going from the Stalinallee in Berlin. An architectural historian with an excellent eye and ludicrous politics. Michael Bloch's life of *Jeremy Thorpe* (Little, Brown, £25) could hardly fail. The second volume of Charles Moore's life of Thatcher (*Everything She Wants*, Allen Lane, £30) had less of the sweep of national history than the first; its mastery of the detail of the 1983–1987 administration was just as compelling.

Other than that, I strongly recommend Philip Glass's hardbitten memoirs, *Words Without Music* (Faber, £22.50), even if — perhaps especially if — like me you can't bear his awful music. Probably the best-written composer's autobiography since Berlioz. Grevel Lindop's life of the mystical writer — a bad, bad writer, but such an interesting one — *Charles Williams: The Third Inking* (OUP, £25) was exemplary, and very thought-provoking about literary fashion. (I don't know if it realised how funny it was, though.)

As for novels, I liked Justin Cartwright's relaxed and compelling *Up Against the Night* (Bloomsbury, £18.99) — the master-

ly Cartwright confidently on home territory. Tessa Hadley is a colleague of mine at Bath Spa University, but anyone would see the penetrating quality of *The Past* (Cape, £16.99) — probably the best novel of the year. Philip Pullman put me onto the mysteriously overlooked novelist MacDonald Harris, whom the Galileo Press have started to reissue. He's a writer of extraordinary quality and inventiveness, magic, fantasy and insanely specific historical investigations into opera, ballooning, early cinema and the whole caboodle. Best of all, he wrote 17 novels, so you'll be in heaven for some time.

Jonathan Mirsky

I enjoyed, for review, *Dogs of Courage* by Clare Campbell (Corsair, £14.95) about dogs fighting in both world wars; and *Deep South* by Paul Theroux (Hamish Hamilton, £20), in which the master of travel books drives through the US south.

I also re-read *Daniel Deronda* for the third time and found it as good as George Eliot's others. It is the first English novel with a positive Jewish hero.

James Walton

Kate Atkinson's *A God in Ruins* (Doubleday, £20) doesn't seem have made remotely the same splash as her previous novel *Life after Life* — and, given the comparative lack of literary pyrotechnics, it's not hard to see why. Yet, in its much quieter way, it might be an even more impressive book, as Atkinson turns the largely unspectacular life of a decent, unambitious man into something almost mythical. And all that before one of most devastating final twists in recent fiction.

Still, if it's wildness you want, there's always Kevin Maher's *Last Night on Earth* (Little, Brown, £14.99), where the adrenaline-fuelled Irish prose shifts constantly between the funny and the heart-breaking, the ferocious and the tender — often in the same paragraph — without ever undermining the emotional impact of the central couple's tangled love story. At times, in fact, the result is not unlike a winningly uninged version of David Nicholls's *One Day*.

Daniel Swift

It is no surprise that writers love to write about writing — not that I'm suggesting writers are narcissistic — but books about writing tend to present it as a slightly impolite habit, like eating with your mouth open. My two books of the year are portraits of how books get written. In the fourth volume of Karl Ove Knausgaard's *My Struggle: Dancing in the Dark* (Harvill Secker, £17.99) the young Karl Ove is 18 and embar-

rassingly serious about his plan to become a writer. He has the black beret and the cigarette habit but is distracted by whisky and girls; he ends up writing the masterpiece in which he himself stars.

In James Shapiro's *1606: William Shakespeare and the Year of Lear* (Faber, £20) we meet a middle-aged Shakespeare who is stranded in something of a dry patch, until the political firestorms of early Jacobean England push him into producing his greatest play, *King Lear*. In both these books, we meet writers who are prolific, brilliant and — the best bit — hard at work.

Lewis Jones

It's only now, nominating Michael Bloch's *Jeremy Thorpe* (Little, Brown, £25) and Andrew Lownie's *Stalin's Englishman: The Lives of Guy Burgess* (Hodder & Stoughton, £25), that I notice how much Thorpe and Burgess had in common: insidious Etonian charm, sexual promiscuity, the conflicting urges to belong and betray, and the addiction to mad risks, taken in plain sight.

Their biographies have things in common too: exhaustive research, elegant construction, psychological acuity, wit and the necessary sympathy. Bloch is fascinating about the details of Thorpe's early life, such as the influence on him of his parents' friends Max Beerbohm and David Lloyd George, and his first steps in blackmail and sexual assault, while Lownie shows that Burgess's treason was far more significant than had been thought.

I've just begun *The Poems of T.S. Eliot* (Faber, 2 vols, £80) — which I suspect will be my book of the decade.

Matthew Parris

Simon Bradley's compendious yet rattling *The Railways: Nation, Network and People* (Profile Books, £25) achieves magnificently a difficult double. Learned and deeply researched, it will not only impress railway buffs but tell even them a great deal they didn't know; yet this is also popular history, which will engage and entertain any lay reader remotely curious about train travel in Britain.

We start ('Seating, Lighting, Heating, Eating') in the first-class compartment of a mid-Victorian railway carriage, move on to the horrors of third-class travel (this is not least a social history of railways) and end our journey at London's modernised Liverpool Street station ('The old railway ambience may have gone, but cappuccino and croissants smell better than diesel fumes'). I like train travel but know little about railway history. My partner, on the other hand, is something of a trainspotter. To him, then, the last word: 'I got to about page 240 before I spotted a single mistake.'

Deep, deadly secrets revealed

Alan West

The Silent Deep: The Royal Navy Submarine Service since 1945

by Peter Hennessy and James Jinks

Allen Lane, £30, pp. 864,

ISBN 9781846145803

Spectator Bookshop, £25.50

The Silent Deep is a compelling and fascinating exposé of a service that for too long has had to remain in the shadows. Peter Hennessy and James Jinks are to be congratulated on producing what must be the definitive work on the Royal Naval Submarine Service from 1945 to the present day. In his inimitable way, Hennessy has gained unprecedented access all the way from able seaman to Prime Minister and been made privy to details that until recently were shrouded in secrecy.

His admiration and affection for the submarine service, his relish in being considered an honorary submariner, is clear; not least when he follows the make-or-break 'Perisher' course where candidates are tested to their limits for the exacting job of commanding one of Her Majesty's submarines, or 'boats'. (The term belies their lethal sophistication.) The tension and excitement of Perisher are palpable — it is the toughest such course in the world.

I noticed a number of pertinent, inter-related themes running through the book. First is the postwar development of quieter, more capable conventional submarines: the struggle to develop faster underwater speeds, and the convoluted processes that led to the fascinating realisation that only nuclear power would produce the first true submarines independent of the surface. Of critical importance was the United States' role in enabling the production of the Royal Navy's first nuclear submarine, HMS *Dreadnought*, launched over 50 years ago. Critical, too, is the continuing development of United Kingdom-designed nuclear attack submarines (SSNs) to the present day. For the first time in an easily digestible way the book highlights how the UK was at the very limit of what it could achieve in design and engineering capability.

The next theme is that of the nation's deterrent and how the RN assumed the responsibility from the RAF in the 1960s with the Polaris missile system in the Resolution class ballistic missile submarine (SSBN). The authors reveal details of the top-secret Chevaline programme, embarked on without the knowledge of Parliament or indeed most in government. We see the decision-making process for the purchase of Trident and the D5 missile car-

ried aboard the Vanguard class SSBNs. The book touches on targeting plans including the Moscow Criteria, and the principles of deterrence are clearly explained. The political shenanigans are laid out with a clarity I have never seen before. For anyone involved or interested in the forthcoming decision to replace our Vanguard class SSBNs this book is a must.

Another strand that weaves its way through the narrative is the most enjoyable stuff of Cold War drama, the real thing that movies like *The Hunt for Red October* gave a glimpse of. It is the covert war of aggressive intelligence-gathering by RN submarines against the Soviet Navy, initially by conventional submarines and then by SSNs. We can read of incidents and techniques that have been secret up till now. One

This is the real stuff of Cold War drama that movies like The Hunt for Red October give only a glimpse of

can't help relishing the details of terrifying collisions, never previously acknowledged, as these underwater leviathans fought a battle of stealth, operating by sound alone in the darkness under the Arctic ice and in the Barents and Norwegian seas.

The broader operational requirements

for the submarine force are explained, and thus we see how nuclear submarines were the capital ships of the Navy by the early 1980s. Much is revealed about tracking Soviet nuclear submarines in the northern seas by means of SOSUS, the seabed arrays. Even to mention these a few years ago would have put one in the dock. With the new Nato Forward strategy in the 1980s our SSNs played a leading part in the military arms race. This kept the Soviets on the back foot, resulting ultimately in the collapse of the Soviet Union.

A whole section on the Falklands war answers many questions about our submarines' vital role in that conflict, previously unknown to the general public. Here are the facts and decisions in the sinking of the *Belgrano* and an account of how close we came to sinking the Argentinian aircraft carrier *Veinticinco de Mayo*.

Alas, the catalogue of our failure over so many years to produce an effective torpedo sheds a bad light on our nation's industrial base. Indeed, the fragility of so much of our industrial expertise in underwater warfare technology is grimly fascinating, and makes one very anxious. Have our leaders put the necessary resources into this crucial area of endeavour? What we clearly see is that building a nuclear submarine is more complex than putting a man on the moon.

It is obvious to me that Hennessy revels in the arcane lexicon of submarine tactics: de-lousing, clearing stern arcs, Crazy Ivan; and in much talk at the back bar of the Faslane submarine base. The authors have been into the farthest nooks and compartments of the submariners' world: sea-riding the dreaded Perisher, crawling all over a Vanguard class in refit, witnessing the test firing of a Trident D5 missile, several dives in SSNs, visiting bases and the submarine building facility at Barrow; and, finally, discovering the nerve centre of the Trident firing chain in Pindar deep under the MoD main building. In conversation with David Cameron about the deterrent, we get his thoughts about having to write the letter to be opened by the submarine commander only in the unthinkable event that the leadership of the United Kingdom is wiped out in a nuclear attack.

Hennessy and Jinks have tracked the size, capability and decline of the Royal Navy's submarine force from the end of the second world war. Starkly they show that we just don't have enough boats to meet the tasks the nation demands of them. But what is most impressive, most heartening, is the quality and courage of our Royal Naval submariners, from those who remained at the end of the war to those serving today.

This meticulous history is no light read; but it is thoroughly rewarding, not just for submariners, who will love it, but for anyone with an interest in maritime affairs and

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Samuel Palmer's 'The Harvest Moon': 'the bowed forms of peasants are shadows of divinity'

grand strategy. There are riveting extracts to be mined for a wider audience, but for me it is a tour de force, a valuable resource for naval historians and future generations to wonder at. And I can't help hoping that our current leaders will make themselves aware of some vitally significant issues that it raises.

Admiral Lord West was First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff from 2002 to 2006.

A mystic's journey

Dominic Green

Samuel Palmer: Shadows on the Wall

by William Vaughan

Yale, £50, pp. 412,

ISBN 9780300209853

Spectator Bookshop, £42.50

In his youth, Samuel Palmer (1805–1881) painted like a Romantic poet. The moonlit field of 'The Harvest Moon' (1831–32) glows with uncanny significance; for Palmer, as for Tolstoy's Lieven, the bowed forms of the peasants at the harvest are shadows of divinity. Palmer aged like a Romantic poet too. The long-haired mystic became a High Church Tory: like Coleridge, but without the drinking. 'The Past for Poets, the Present for Pigs,' was Palmer's opinion of England after the Reform Act. But did the poetry of Palmer's seven-year sojourn in the 'Valley of Vision' at Shoreham, Kent also decline into

prosaic commerce and pastoral nostalgia?

In *Samuel Palmer: Shadows on the Wall*, William Vaughan, an expert on the painter, reminds us that our two Palmers were only ever one. Palmer was not a rebel hermit in his Shoreham period. He took to the woods in 1826 with a small inheritance, and returned to the city regularly, as Thoreau was to commute from Walden Pond to Concord. He worked with like-minded friends, including John Linnell, Edward Calvert and George Richmond, and secured a benediction from the ageing William Blake. The Palmer gang, like their German contemporaries the Nazarenes, styled themselves for the market: anticipating the self-publicising of the Pre-Raphaelites, the young idealists called themselves the Ancients.

Graham Sutherland called the early Palmer 'a kind of English van Gogh'. In the valley of Shoreham, Palmer recalled, 'the beautiful was loved for itself'. The luminosity is eccentric, not desperate. The later Palmer is a kind of English Claude Lorrain. The subject matter is stolid, the passions decorous, the effects controlled. But Palmer's talent did not die on his 30th birthday. In 1832, having come into more money, he had bought himself a house in Lisson Grove. The Ancients were drifting apart: Richmond into portraiture, and Calvert into paganism. Palmer married John Linnell's daughter Hannah, and settled in London.

Like Bob Dylan after his motorcycle crash, Palmer cut his hair and changed his voice. He became a successful producer of pastoral watercolours and etchings. The

preliminary drawing for 'A Pastoral Scene' (1835) evokes the Shoreham years. The harvesters and their field are bleached by a ripe segment of moon, and a shepherd and his boy drive their flock through deep shadows. But the final oil, now in the Ashmolean, is restrained and muted. The moon is reduced to a sliver, the sheep are resting, and the shepherds are static in the long Arcadian twilight.

Time changed Palmer, not least through the premature death of his beloved son Thomas in 1861. Yet Vaughan detects a technical development alongside Palmer's mugging by reality. The delicate son of a bookdealer, Palmer had received a spotty education. He had trained as a landscape painter, not in drawing, like Blake. The young Palmer was a highbrow primitivist, superimposing the cast shadow of Romantic painting onto the swains and brooks of the literary pastoral, creating the 'mystic glimmer' that Yeats, an admirer of the Ancients, misquoted or refashioned into a Celtic 'misty glimmer'. Only later did Palmer complete his training. Like many autodidacts, he was educated back to front: as Blake left his *Divine Comedy* series unfinished, so Palmer left incomplete a translation and illustration of Virgil's *Eclogues*. Palmer ended where he might have begun but, as Bob Dylan discovered, the trip was better than the destination.

A martyred city

Ian Thomson

Coventry: Thursday 14 November 1940

by Frederick Taylor

Bloomsbury, £20, pp. 356,

ISBN 9781408860267

Spectator Bookshop, £17

On 14 November 1940, at seven in the evening, the Luftwaffe began to bomb Coventry. The skyline turned red like an eclipse of the sun as clouds of cinders, lit red by the blaze, floated down over the great West Midlands city. Coventry seemed to have been hit by a meteorite. The mile-high roar of magnesium incendiary flames created a firestorm in which over 554 people died and twice as many were wounded. Life as Coventrians had known it, lived it and loved it, came to an end that Thursday night. Hitler's first Blitz on an English city had taken the inhabitants by complete surprise.

In the space of 11 hours, buildings and people were torn apart, crushed and suffocated. Three quarters of Coventry's plane and automobile plants were obliterated; the medieval cathedral was left a hacked-out ruin billowing smoke. Few could endure more blackout, bombs

and sirens. (The stench of burned buildings, compact of blackened masonry, dust and pitch, was bad enough.) So everyone who could left — on lorries, on foot — to stay with friends and family further afield.

In the destruction's aftermath, writes Taylor in his riveting chronicle, Philip Larkin looked frantically for his parents and saw the burning cathedral where they had christened him 18 years earlier. As the young poet picked his way through his birthplace amid a stench of burning, he tried to find some meaning in the deaths and the 'full horror of what technology

'Hitler had my windows and my three-piece suite, but he's not going to have my Christmas puddings'

could visit', as Taylor puts it. An eerie solemnity pervaded the streets. Corpses lay disfigured amid the ruins and bluish phosphorous flames flickered where the bodies lay. His parents had survived after all, but Larkin would never return to his native Coventry for any length of time.

In today's parlance, Hitler's attack had been designed to 'shock and awe'. German newspapers gloatingly reported that Coventry had been *coventrieren* ('Concentrated'), meaning 'destroyed utterly'. The coinage would find an equivalent in the somewhat awkward British 'Berlinated', used to describe Britain's retaliatory bombing of Dresden, Hamburg and Lübeck. Coventry was deemed a legitimate target for its munitions factories, but much of the ordnance had hit civilian homes, with comparatively few military installations damaged. In the blasted houses with staircases exposed, Coventrians had been born and loved and now they had died in their several hundreds.

According to Taylor, Coventry was a test case for a new type of total war, *Totaler Krieg*, where death would come from the sky without warning and abundantly. Hitler's was an attack not just on Coventry, but on all democratic Britain. In vivid pages, Taylor describes how the cathedral roof had burned like a candle as the smoke got 'thicker and blacker', and then crashed amid flames. The flames sent a hot wind gusting against the fire-fighters, making their work impossible as the heat set light to anything flammable.

Water supplies were quickly exhausted but quantities of sand helped the brigades damp down smaller fires. Brown smoke blew up from the Daimler and Triumph factories against all that was still visible of the Coventry moon. At Warwickshire Hospital nearby, meanwhile, nurses put up blood transfusions and saline drips. The wards, crowded with bodies and harried-looking doctors,

were in short supply of everything, not least morphine. The clove sweetness of anaesthetic and pungency of dried blood overwhelmed as the death toll mounted through the night. Mass burials in the 'martyred city' of Coventry took place a week later, on 20 November, amid flowers, prayers and lit candles.

Throughout the attack, fatally, the moon had hung bright over all the Midlands, treacherously lighting up targets. Only one of the 515 German aircraft was brought down, crashing in Loughborough 40 miles from Coventry. The city's near-destruction was inexpressible: the bombs had ploughed up the medieval streets like a field. Still the inhabitants held their nerve. 'Hitler had my windows, and he's had my three-piece suite,' one woman grumbled, 'but he's not going to have my Christmas puddings.' Christmas was Christmas, never mind Adolf.

Taylor's account of flame and ruin in the Midlands in November 1940, superbly researched, shows how terror could come to anyone, anywhere, any time. It still can.

Bravery

I am not ready for the temple
but
neither
am I ready
for the market.
Leave me, I
pray, a little
longer
amongst my icy candles
that light my bitter
lonely rooms.
When spring comes (and
the seasons follow no
order) you'll find me
heading
all queues of
worldly
bravery.
Just give me
a few more
days for
cowardice
and
the
flickering
dark.

— Alexander Verey



Gardening books for Christmas

Ursula Buchan

I spent the summer of 1976 working as a trainee gardener at the Arboretum Kalmthout in Belgium. My employer was charming and kind, but I could not suppress a prickle of shame-faced irritation every time she mentioned a former student called Susan Dickinson. Whenever I leant on my hoe for a moment in the pelting heat, I was reminded how accomplished and hardworking this horticultural superheroine had been. For the past 25 years, Sue Dickinson has been head gardener at Eythrope in Buckinghamshire, owned by Lord Rothschild, and she is widely acknowledged to be the finest gardener in the country. I need never have wasted finite energy on envy.

The four-acre walled garden at Eythrope is the subject of *Paradise and Plenty*, published by Pimpernel Press (£50). It is written by Mary Keen, most appropriately, since she designed the garden, and it is a handsome volume, both coffee-table book and practical manual. Eythrope is laid out on a heroic scale, and cultivated by eight gardeners in the old country-house manner, providing fruit, vegetables and flowers for the house all the year round. It is open very rarely but, on the two occasions I have visited, my heart beat fast with admiration at the quality of the gardening done there, in particular the astonishingly skilful cultivation of glasshouse fruits. There is simply nowhere to touch it.

The photographs by Tom Hatton are monochrome when showing some intricate horticultural operation, but colour when



Left: perfectly stacked wood, Norwegian-style;
and (above) the May display at the auricula theatre, Eythrope

portraying the garden itself. Flaps show the garden under snow, then open to reveal the same view in summer. You can absorb a great deal of well-trying practical gardening advice from this attractively written book, but the dedication of a Susan Dickinson is not so easily acquired.

Nor that of Joan Morgan. She is an expert pomologist, whose *The Book of Apples* (1993) is still the Bible for all connoisseurs of apples and — at last — she has produced a companion volume, *The Book of Pears* (Ebury Press, £45). All the features of the first are to be found in the second: the pear's history, cultivation and commercial uses, together with brilliantly clear, precise and useful descriptions of every cultivar known to orchardists, and equally precise and alluring botanical paintings by Elizabeth Dowle. The pear is less known than the apple, and its naming and culture more complicated and arcane, so the publication of this most readable book is a cause for celebration.

Grow for Flavour by James Wong (Mitchell Beazley, £20) also has something unusual and original to offer in the edible produce line. Most of this highly illustrated book consists of tips on how to get the most flavourful crops, using the best varieties and cultivation methods. Wong rides a bike, rolls up his sweater sleeves, and writes colloquially, so you can tell he's a cool dude aiming to inform other cool dudes. He is open-minded and curious, cosmopolitan and modern. He is also a professional botanist, who understands the science of nutrition and flavour, and has bothered to look hard at the evidence, and do the vital trials. By the end of the book you should know

about pluots, apriums and samphire, as well as the advantages of stroking your seedling lettuces, watering transplanted trees with a sugar solution and collecting wild fennel pollen.

Garden photography and its reproduction have never been better, and Nick Bailey, curator at the Chelsea physic garden, has taken advantage of this in *365 Days of Colour in Your Garden* (Kyle Books, £25), collaborating with the award-winning photographer Jonathan Buckley to produce a bright, useful gazetteer of suitable plants. 'Colour all year round' is, of course, a chimera, but Bailey points us some way towards that holy grail. He is especially good on colour theory, how to extend flowering seasons and good plant pairings.

There are woodstacks built in the shape of fish and even in the likeness of the composer Rossini

Another award-winning photographer, Andrew Lawson, has captured the gardens of Oxford colleges to accompany Tim Richardson's elegant prose in *Oxford College Gardens* (Frances Lincoln, £40). These Pembroke men make a dream team, since Lawson has a true and careful eye while Richardson is a most thoughtful and intelligent writer on landscape, gardens and garden history. Almost all the college gardens get respectful treatment, even the ones which really don't deserve such cultured attention, but the best — Worcester, St John's, Magdalen and New College — look wonderful.

For all the quality of these books, I've had as much pleasure from reading Lars Mytting's *Norwegian Wood: Chopping, Stacking and Drying Wood the Scandinavian Way*, translated by Robert Ferguson (MacLehose, £20). Our response to firewood is both atavistic and aesthetic, so the attraction of these activities is compelling. How much more so in Norway, where temperatures get so low in winter, and there are so many trees. Written in a pleasant, easy style, this book is brim full with 'I never knew that' gems: the frames of Morgan cars are made of ash, and during the war there were enormous woodpiles in Helsinki's central square. There are pictures of woodstacks built in the shape of fish and even in the likeness of the composer Rossini. Mytting understands perfectly the reassuring continuity, as well as the beauty and usefulness of trees, both dead and alive. I now know how to stack properly the wood cut from ash trees I planted 20 years ago; this knowledge has enriched my life.

His own worst enemy Tim Bouverie

Rab Butler: The Best Prime Minister We Never Had?

by Michael Jago

Biteback, £25, pp. 480,

ISBN 9781849549202

Spectator Bookshop, £21.25

'The best prime minister we never had' is not an epithet exclusive to Rab Butler. Widely applied to the late Denis Healey, it was also said of Hugh Gaitskell, Iain Macleod and Roy Jenkins. (More recent candidates would include Michael Heseltine and Kenneth Clarke.) All had arguably greater intellects than the prime ministers they ended up serving, all enjoyed significant popularity in the country and all were committed to the centre-ground of British politics. Yet while 'The best PM we've never had' is a club rather than a solitary designation, Rab Butler is pre-eminent among its members. The holder of all three great offices of state — a record shared with only Sir John Simon and James Callaghan — the architect of postwar Conservative policy, a deputy prime minister and first secretary of state, there were no fewer than three occasions on which he might have become prime minister, on two of which he was expected to.

So why didn't he? The conspiratorial answer is that he was denied the highest office by a cabal of Old Etonians. (Butler went to Marlborough, having failed to win a scholarship to Eton.) This theory was popularised by Iain Macleod who, in a famous article for this magazine, argued that the 1963 Conservative leadership election had



Rab Butler after the defeat of the Conservatives in 1964. 'His clothes were truly tragic,' said Chips Channon

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been rigged by a 'magic circle' of establishment grandees in favour of the Scottish aristocrat Lord Home. But as Michael Jago argues in this careful chronicle of Butler's political career, Butler himself was responsible for his failure to reach the top.

A liberal Conservative who three times infuriated the right of his party — over Suez, over flogging, and over his much-derided 1955 'Pots and Pans' budget — Butler lacked the force of personality to convince his own party that his leadership credentials matched his brains. Indeed his brains were as much a handicap as an asset. Notoriously described by John Stuart Mill as the 'stupid' party, the Conservative party has always distrusted intellectuals and hasn't chosen one as its leader since Arthur Balfour. With his donnish manner (he became a Cambridge don, having achieved a remarkable double first), his clothes — described by the flamboyant Tory MP Chips Channon as 'truly tragic' — and his sad irregular features, Butler could never compete with the Edwardian-styled Harold Macmillan reading Jane Austen on a grouse moor.

More detrimental than his flawed image was Butler's indecisiveness — his 'gently barbed ambiguity'. This was fatal to his chances of becoming prime minister and, according to Jago, why Butler would not in fact have been a particularly good premier. His most damaging flip-flop was over Suez — ironic, since Macmillan performed

a complete volte-face and yet still managed to pluck the crown from the thorn-bush. Equally disastrous was Butler's decision to levitate above the fray of the 1963 leadership election before throwing away his last chance to become PM by agreeing to serve under Alec Douglas-Home. As Enoch Powell later remarked, Butler had been given a loaded revolver but refused to pull the trigger.

With style and persuasive analysis, Jago guides us through the ups and downs of Butler's political life: his ill-conceived zeal for appeasement, the triumph of the 1944 Education Act, his prosperous time at the Exchequer, his liberal time at the Home Office, and his all too brief time in charge of foreign affairs. What is sadly missing from this book, however, is any sense of Richard Austen Butler the man. Though we learn on page 403 that he enjoyed shooting, there is little discussion of any wider hinterland, personality, or even the philosophy which guided his politics. Admittedly he was an enigma to many of his contemporaries: 'Anyone who understands Rab Butler,' a waggish colleague remarked, 'must be gravely misinformed.' But it is a shame that more is not revealed beneath the diffidence and the 'Rabisms'. However, this excellent political biography remains well worth reading. Not the 'best prime minister we never had' but one of our most gifted and important politicians.

August in Arizona Neel Mukherjee

Cockfosters

by Helen Simpson

Cape, £15.99, pp. 140,

ISBN 9781910702208

Spectator Bookshop, £13.59

Helen Simpson is not a prolific writer; six slim collections of short stories in 25 years, each timed quinquennially with what seems, at least retrospectively, like impeccable forward planning. In fact, time, we shall see, is what her career so far has been about. She has also heroically resisted the pressure — and there must have been a significant one, at least towards the beginning — to move on from the short form and deliver a novel, as if the short story were not an entirely different genre but just a warming-up exercise before the heavyweight training session of the novel.

Cockfosters is a slender volume, all of 140 pages, each of its nine stories named after a place ('Kentish Town', 'Kythera', 'Arizona', 'Moscow' etc.), which can be both real and metaphorical. In one of the key stories, 'Arizona', which depicts an hour's acupuncture session administered by Mae to an academic, Liz, who is just entering the menopause, the acupuncturist says that she envisages the 'new state', the post-menopausal self, 'as being like Arizona... arriving in another state, brilliantly lit and level and filled with dependable sunshine'. Something is wrested away from the derogatory, popular, inevitably male-manufactured notions of that new state and reshaped as a brighter beginning, a liberation, even.

Throughout the collection, focused rigorously on the August years — Mae's term for the fifties — of (mostly) women's lives, Simpson goes about this kind of overturning and revision of centuries-old assumptions about women and their inner and outer lives with wit, humour and a steely yet compassionate intelligence. 'Erewhon', for example, reimagines gender relations as an absolute inversion: it is the man who lies awake in the small hours worrying about all the trivial things women are supposed to worry about, such as body shape, snacking, dissatisfactions of sex, children, partner watching porn, and it is the woman who runs a successful business, has all the power, turns over and begins snoring immediately after having sex. The last five words have the effect of a slap to the face. The story is witty, hilarious and deeply discomfiting, certainly to any male reader.

Two of the stories have section breaks in the form of the ticking of a digital clock; one story is divided into the five consecutive days of its unfolding; another one marked by the stops on the Piccadilly Line. The people Simpson writes about are no longer in

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their youth and have become conscious of the noise of time; not so much as intimations of mortality as different experiential stages of life. She rehabilitates the process of getting older by pushing against its dominant cultural understanding and finds joy and consolation and a hard-won if provisional wisdom, or the beginnings of wisdom. Sometimes one gets the sense that her stories are some kind of futuristic instruments, wearing the disguise of the short story, planted into the heart of evolving contemporary life to take hyperaccurate readings of the inner weather and shifting equilibria of a certain class of society.

A stunning blend of simplicity and complexity

William Cook

Tintin: Hergé's Masterpiece

by Pierre Sterckx,

translated by Michael Farr

Rizzoli, £35, pp. 238,

ISBN 9780789329479

Spectator Bookshop, £29.75

Reading *Tintin* when I was a child, in Britain in the 1970s, I always assumed Georges Remi's creation was just a harmless bit of fun. However, when I went to Belgium I discovered, to my amazement, that over there they take him very seriously indeed (this year, a single Tintin picture sold for €2.5 million in Brussels). In Britain, the fearless reporter in the plus fours is a quaint juvenile amusement. In his native Belgium he's seen as high art, and his creator Hergé (Georges Remi's initials, backwards) is revered.

The late Harry Thompson wrote a brilliant book about Tintin from the British perspective. It was informed and affectionate, but stopped short of adulation. Pierre Sterckx's bulkier book belongs in the Continental camp. It's designed to sit alongside proper monographs, not children's comics. It's no surprise that Sterckx's credits include a book about Vermeer.

To be fair, Sterckx knows his stuff, and his sources could hardly be better: he was close friends with Hergé from 1965 until his death in 1983. A curator and art historian, he taught Hergé about fine art (the chapter on Hergé's art collection is particularly interesting — I never knew he collected Lichtenstein).

Sterckx clearly knows Hergé inside out, so why does his scholarly prose feel so detached? There are some intriguing insights into the origins of Hergé's style, his use of monochrome and his debt to Chinese brushwork, but I yearned for more personal revelations. His two marriages, his depressions, his difficulties during (and after) the second world war — all these fascinating

incidents are dismissed with frustrating brevity. Sterckx must have enough first-hand info to write a fine memoir about this elusive, enigmatic man, but his lavish tome is more primer than proper biography, which is a pity.

Never mind. The illustrations are beautiful, and there are lots I've never seen before, mostly from the snazzy Hergé Museum in Belgium: not only Tintin, but all sorts of ephemera, from adverts to portraits. These images are far more revealing than Sterckx's quasi academic commentary. Tintinologists tie themselves in knots trying to justify Hergé's war record, but his cartoons from the 1930s show he was no Nazi. Sterckx says he was a liberal, but above all he was a dreamer who wanted to be left alone. He loved being a boy scout and Tintin allowed him to carry on being a boy scout throughout his life.

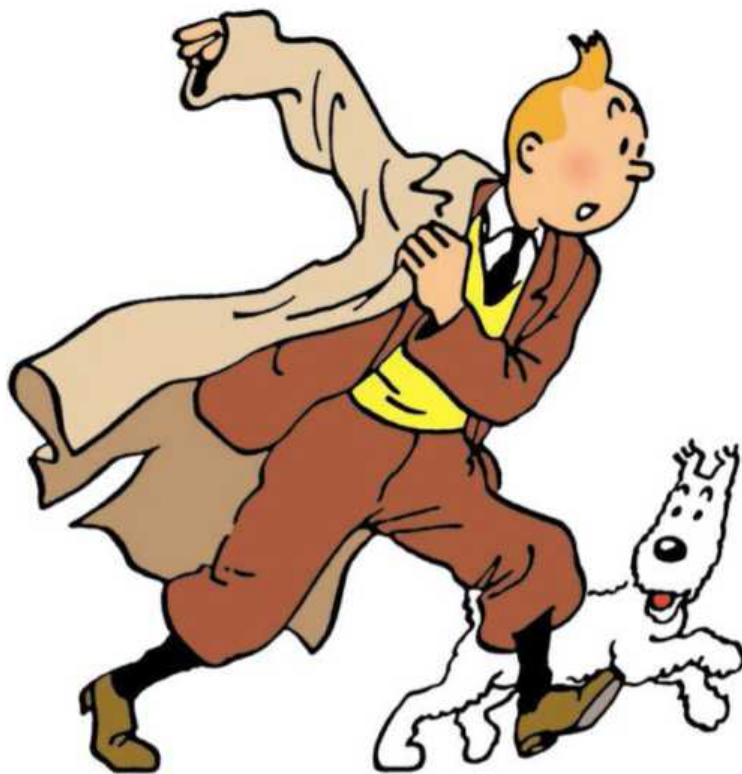
So was Hergé an artistic genius or just a gifted draughtsman? Whose assessment is more accurate, the Belgians' or the Brits'? Much as I adore Hergé, I can't quite go

along with Sterckx, who likens him to van Gogh and Cézanne. Even so, there is something about *Tintin* that sets it apart from other comics, even *Asterix*.

So what makes Hergé unique? Well, his pictures are a stunning blend of simplicity and complexity, but above all he was a superb storyteller, whose absurd, enchanting characters bear comparison with Waugh or Wodehouse. He's part of a picaresque tradition that stretches back to Cervantes (Sterckx also cites his fondness for Alexandre Dumas, Mark Twain and Jerome K. Jerome).

Hergé's clear, clean lines inspired countless grown up artists, but I still think children understand him best. He's endlessly enjoyable, and that's what makes him special. How many other artists can make you howl with laughter, and simultaneously hold you in suspense? 'A work that does not unsettle is not worth the effort,' says Sterckx, quoting Duchamp, but what's so splendid about Hergé is that his work isn't unsettling in the slightest. In fact there's only one thing that jars about Tintin's breathless adventures: despite landing so many scoops and breaking so many front-page stories, have you noticed how this ageless journalist never actually gets around to filing any copy? On a British newspaper, he'd have been fired years ago.

Tintin: Hergé's Masterpiece is at Somerset House, London (12 November–31 January 2016).



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Curiosities for Christmas

Marcus Berkmann

There is not, sadly, a dedicated Trivia Books section in your local Waterstones, although at this time of year there really should be. But what would we call it? Trivia sounds too trivial. Loo Books sounds too lavatorial. Books for the Man or Woman who Has Everything, Except this Book is probably closest, but might need editing. Whatever we decide to call them, there is an unusually fine crop this year, and several are historically inclined. *Gimson's Kings and Queens* (Square Peg, £10.99) is subtitled *Brief Lives of the Monarchs since 1066*, and gives us exactly that, in Andrew Gimson's characteristically elegant and entertaining prose. 'There are many admirable biographies of individual monarchs. But I do not know of a recent, readable volume which covers them all in under 250 pages.'

This is the stuff of history lessons long ago, and long forgotten by most of us. But did I ever know that the King of France gave Henry III an elephant, which lived in the Tower of London and died in 1257, 'apparently after drinking too much red wine'? George I came to London without a wife, but with two mistresses and 18 cooks. According to Lord Chesterfield, 'No woman came amiss

to him, if she were only very willing and very fat.' Edward I 'had a sense of justice, but not of any very modern kind. In 1303, his treasury at Westminster was broken into and all the Crown Jewels were stolen. The thieves were caught and their skins were nailed to the treasury door.' This is essentially *Horrible Histories* for grown-ups, splendidly enhanced by Martin Rowson's typically scabrous portraits.

Reel History: The World according to the Movies (Atlantic, £12.99) collects Alex von Tunzelmann's *Guardian* columns about historical accuracy in mainstream cinema. Each week she takes a different film and gives it a good going over. *Elizabeth* (with Cate

The dinosaurs that appear in the film One Million Years BC had in fact died off 64 million years earlier

Blanchett) gets an A for entertainment and an E for history. In Mel Gibson's mad, anti-Semitic *The Passion of the Christ*, Jesus, being a carpenter, is building a dining table. 'This will never catch on,' says Mary. 'Right,' says Alex, 'so Jesus isn't just building a dining table; he has invented the dining table.' *Braveheart* is 'historically speaking, one of the daftest films ever made' and 'serves up a great big steaming haggis of lies'.

Her book, chronological in structure, starts with *One Million Years BC* (entertainment D; history Fail, not least because dinosaurs had died off 64 million years earlier) and ends with *The Fifth Estate*, that very dull film about Julian Assange, in which 'the significant action... boils down to a few keystrokes on a laptop'. Just occasionally she overdoes the snark, but in the main she is fair-minded, eagle-eyed and great fun.

Robert Newman's *The Entirely Accurate Encyclopaedia of Evolution* (Freight Books, £11.99) is a real oddity. Newman is a comedian, best known for his partnership with David Baddiel in the 1990s, who has lived a quieter life since, mainly writing novels. This book is based on a stand-up show that mutated into a Radio 4 series, and seeks to do two things: express wonderment at the wild multiplicity of the living world, and rescue evolutionary theory from ideologically inclined neo-Darwinists, 'who for the past 40-odd years have told us that a more or less ruthless duplicity lies behind all human behaviour'. More serious than many comedians, and a subtler thinker than much of his audience, Newman can get carried away by the righteousness of his rage, but this is a fascinating and highly original book, the sort you pick up idly and then discover that two hours have gone by.

Nick Middleton's *An Atlas of Coun-*

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tries that Don't Exist (Macmillan, £20) is another with a usefully explanatory subtitle: *A Compendium of Fifty Unrecognised and Largely Unnoticed States*. These are countries that would dearly love to exist but haven't been allowed to: they 'inhabit a world of shifting borders, visionary leaders and forgotten peoples'. So Tibet is here, along with Northern Cyprus, the Crimea and the Isle of Man, so legendary as a tax haven you are liable to forget it's a real place. But there are others here you won't have heard of, with strange and in many cases rather sad histories, of control by others, of failed independence movements and occasionally vast death tolls. This is geopolitics at its messiest and most human, and makes you feel relieved to be living somewhere else.

Finally, David Long's *Lost Britain* (Michael O'Mara, £9.99) is a quietly beguiling A-Z of forgotten landmarks and lost traditions. 'Over time,' he writes, 'priceless treasures have gone missing, exceptional constructions have been torn down, potentially world-changing technologies have been quietly killed off and entire villages have vanished.' The last condemned cell in a British prison (at Wandsworth) is now a television lounge for prison guards. There are traces of a chariot racing track underneath Colchester: at five metres tall, 400 metres

long and 69 metres wide, it may well have been the largest Roman building in the country after Hadrian's Wall. King John's treasure, according to legend, disappeared into the oozing slime of the Fens, and lunatics are still looking for it. If they found it, of course, it would only be a disappointment. Far better to read about it instead, in the warmth of your own home, idly dreaming of doubloons that are gone for ever.

The atheist delusion

Tim Martin

When the Professor Got Stuck in the Snow

by Dan Rhodes

Aardvark Bureau, £8.99, pp. 208,

ISBN 9781910709016

Spectator Bookshop, £8.54.

Dan Rhodes apparently had trouble finding a publisher for this short novel, and it's possible to envisage a certain amount of sorrowful head-shaking in legal departments at its theme. In the dead of winter, accompanied by his long-suffering 'male secretary' Smee, a 'thrice-married evolutionary biologist' named Richard Dawkins gets stranded in rural England while en

route to address the All Bottoms Women's Institute on the topic of the non-existence of God. This elderly, irascible scientist is taken in by the local vicar and his wife, and forced to contend with various local problems, from religious disputes — 'Your silly books are just collections of fairy stories; you might as well revolve your lives around the teachings of the Three Billy Goats Gruff' — to the switching-on of the village's Christmas lights, an event which he chooses to preface with 'a five-minute distillation of his views on the subject of infanticide'.

Rhodes's book is satire of the broadest stripe: it is, in fact, the closest thing to a strip from *Viz* magazine that I've seen in novel form. The tone swerves hilariously between puerile *double-entendre* (there's a running sequence of gags about 'seeing Upper Bottom') and lacerating comedy about the atheist movement and its acolytes. The professor indicates with pride that if you are looking for an expert to teach you all about how the gaps in the fossil record in no way challenge the theory of evolution, you could do worse than call on an alternative comedian and, upon seeing a car with ONE LIFE — LIVE IT written on the side, he observes that he'd like to borrow the slogan as a title for his next book, 'though I dare say Grayling would come

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out with a volume of his own six months later, called *Live Your One Life* or some such.'

It's very funny, but it isn't bulletproof. The comic motors are the logic and detachment upon which the real Dawkins prides himself: Rhodes's professor is incapable of seeing category distinctions between expressions of religious thought, so he meets the hazy belief in God of simple country folk with the same fury — 'You might as well say there is a goblin with a purple face!' — that he reserves for religious extremism. Because this invariance is the point, the comedy requires a setting upon which fundamentalism, radicalism and zealotry never intrude; and that, of course, is not always the backdrop against which Rhodes's real-life target operates.

Instead, this is mickey-taking as British as pantomime, pitting its derisive professor against a bunch of amiable, Postman-Pattish Christians (vicars, soldiers, members of the WI, a little girl with a sick cat) in a way that makes huge comic capital from the English social horror of intemperance and extreme opinion.

Non-Brits are likely to find it more confusing, as may anyone who hasn't followed the real Professor Dawkins's second career as provocateur, self-appointed enemy of 'illogic, obscurantism, pretension' and online troll. And despite a cunning flick of the cape that seems to put the author out of reach of legal action, there is at least one thrice-married evolutionary biologist whom it will certainly not amuse. I, however, laughed myself sick.

In the grip of yellow fever

Lilian Pizzichini

Lord of Strange Deaths: The Fiendish World of Sax Rohmer

edited by Phil Baker and Anthony Clayton
Strange Attractor, £25 (plus £5 p+p in UK),
pp. 220, ISBN 9781907222252

In late Victorian south London a 'lower-middle-class' boy, Arthur Ward, is lingering over his copy of *The Arabian Nights*. The book falls open at a colour illustration of Scheherazade, mysteriously pictured with a white peacock. Twenty years later, she materialises as Kâramanêh, the dazzling female sidekick of Fu Manchu. Young Arthur, who by now had reinvented himself as Sax Rohmer, was the author of the Fu Manchu novels, and Arthur had faded so far into the background that it seems even Sax Rohmer forgot him. He conjured his pen name from the Saxon, 'Sax' for 'blade' and 'rohmer' which means 'roamer'. He was in essence the original bladerunner. In this enchantingly playful collection of essays on Rohmer the facts of his life are as vaporous as the pea-soups

that informed his imaginings. As Antony Clayton reports, Arthur's was a 'strangely neglected childhood'.

As a songwriter and music-hall sketch writer Rohmer hit the money lode with *The Mystery of Doctor Fu-Manchu* (1913). The moustachioed super-villain fed the Edwardian appetite for murderous plots involving dacoits and thuggees. He had 'dragon ladies' as glamorous assistants. He was an agent of the secret society Si-Fan, and the mastermind behind the assassinations of western imperialists.

In an essay luminous with detail, Ann Witchard describes the sulphurous city in which young Arthur began his plotting, depicted by Whistler swathed in a ghastly yellow, the colour of Wildean decadence. Other essayists provide historical context for Rohmer's dabbings in the Orient. But what enlivens his fiction is his total disregard for empirical truth. Panics about immigration, a new journalism personified by W. T. Stead, best known for his investigation of child sex trafficking in Lisson Grove, alongside outbreaks of cholera in slums, fed the fears of the reading public. Of all the immigrants, the Chinese were regarded as particularly 'unassimilable'. Despite the fact that the crime rate actually fell after Chinese families moved into Limehouse, the East End dock became notorious for lurid goings-on. Rohmer took his cue, blending aspects of Egyptomania with Sinophobia for the 'rot-revellers and tosh-connoisseurs'. For the modern reader, Rohmer offers a 'luresome' view of 'teemful' early 20th-century London.

Racism is the real scourge of the metropolis. Phil Baker argues that Rohmer's 'opportunistic bigotry' was more culpable

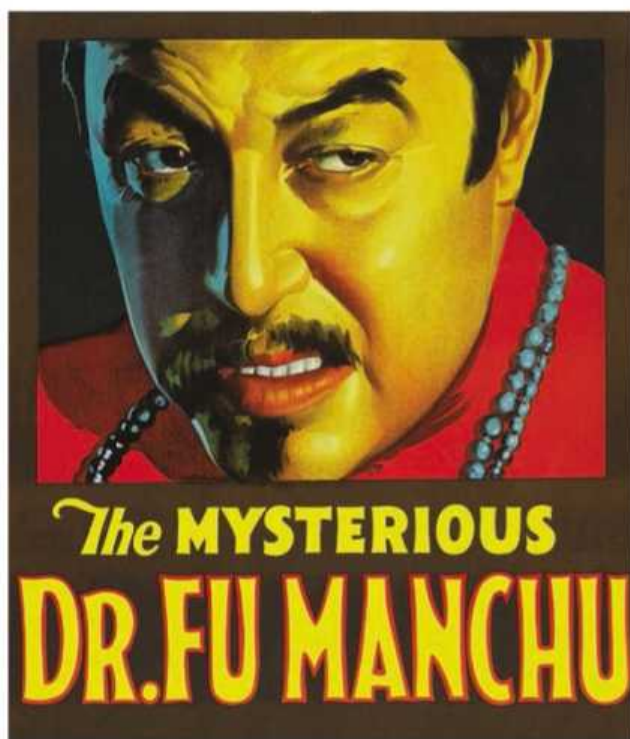
than genuine fear. Witchard says all this fuss about opium and yellow devils was actually Dickens's fault — *Edwin Drood*, in particular. But the momentum was in full swing, boosted by a bohemian fascination with intoxication, and the moral majority's fear of the enemy within.

Enter the Gaiety Girl clad in loose silk robes and warbling against a backdrop of wind chimes. Rohmer based *Dope* (1919) on the case of Billie Carleton, a starlet who was famously found dead in her Savoy suite the morning after the Armistice night Victory Ball. She had overdosed on drugs supplied

*All the fuss about opium and yellow devils was Dickens's fault —
Edwin Drood in particular*

by Ada Son Ping Yu, the Scottish wife of a Limehouse Chinese. Another newsworthy fatality involved a nightclub hostess, a stash of cocaine, and a West End playboy known as Brilliant Chang. He became Burma Chang, the evil genius of Rohmer's *Yellow Shadows* (1919).

Imperial Gothic, found in writers such as Rider Haggard, and esoteric occultism, with its sinister rites from 'abroad', as opposed to a Christianity that could only rustle up a village fête, fed Rohmer's bank balance throughout his lifetime. But what makes Fu Manchu so beguiling and so long-lived (apart from his elixir of youth, of course)? He is ingenious, agile, a master of disguise. But one of this criminal mastermind's most distinguishing characteristics is that he keeps his word — the quintessential trait of the English gentleman.



GETTY IMAGES

Artificial life

Ruskin dismissed Julia Margaret Cameron's photographs as untrue. But, argues *Martin Gayford*, the same could be said of any picture

One day Julia Margaret Cameron was showing John Ruskin a portfolio of her photographic portraits. The critic grew more and more impatient until he came to a study of the scientist Sir John Herschel in which the subject's hair stood up 'like a halo of fireworks'. At this point, Ruskin slammed the portfolio shut and Cameron thumped him violently on the back, exclaiming, 'John Ruskin, you are not worthy of photographs!' He was indeed smackingly wrong to dismiss her work, as visitors to an exhibition at the V&A celebrating the 200th anniversary of her birth will be able to see for themselves.

There are multiple ironies underlying this spat (they happily made up by lunchtime). Ruskin disapproved — officially speaking, at least — of photography. Discoursing on the popular belief that 'the camera cannot lie', he remarked that photographs were true in a sense. 'But this truth of mere transcript has nothing to do with Art properly so called; and will never supersede it.'

A complication is that Ruskin himself had collected hundreds of daguerreotypes of landscape and architectural subjects, often collaborating closely with the photographers who had taken them. Some of these very closely resembled his own watercolour drawings. There was a further paradox. In a way his complaint about Julia Margaret Cameron's pictures was that they had too much to do with art, but not the variety he favoured.

Ruskin admired the close-focus style of Pre-Raphaelites such as Millais — which was in turn heavily influenced by photography — and painted in that manner himself. Cameron, however, reflected an entirely different kind of painting. Dante Gabriel Rossetti — an astute observer if a bad speller — put his finger on just what that was when he thanked her for 'the most beautiful photograph' she had sent him, adding, 'It is like a Lionardo.'

That was a bull's eye. Cameron often consciously imitated High Renaissance painting, posing youthful friends and relations in the attitude of angels by Raphael or a Michelangelo sibyl. Years later, one of her models recalled, 'No wonder those old photographs of us, leaning over the imaginary ramparts of heaven, look anxious and wistful; this was how we felt.'

The anxiety was created partly by Cameron's commanding personality — 'a terrifying elderly woman', according to the same witness, 'with plump eager face and piercing eyes'. It was also the product of the long exposures Cameron favoured (up to four minutes of motionlessness for the sitter). These, in

The border between the hand drawn and the photographic is, and always has been, utterly blurred

turn, take us back to Leonardo because she — like the Italian master — understood the crucial importance of lighting.

All she required as a studio, Cameron wrote, was a room 'capable of having all light excluded except one window', and that she would drape with yellow calico. Exposure times were lengthy in the early days of photography, causing some practitioners to fix their sitters' heads in clamps to prevent them moving. Restricting the illumination lengthened the duration even further. But in conjunction with Cameron's tendency to take her pictures slightly out of focus this procedure created a wonderful softness. It was indeed the photographic equivalent to Leonardo's *sfumato*, defined by the master himself as 'without lines or borders, in the manner of smoke'.

Clearly, the works of Julia Margaret Cameron were not 'true' in the sense that Ruskin discussed. They were highly artificial and carefully constructed. That, however, is probably the case with any good picture, whether painted, drawn, photographed or

filmed. There are deep interconnections between all those ways of making images of the world about us; this is the premise of a book on which I have been working with David Hockney, *A History of Pictures*, to be published next autumn.

We argue that there are continuities running from the images on the walls of prehistoric caves to the ones on your computer screen. In part, this is because all pictures share the same problems, arising from an attempt to represent a three-dimensional world on a two-dimensional surface. It is also because images in different media have always influenced one another, and still do.

Photography was first revealed to the world in 1839 by a painter and impresario named Louis Daguerre. In fact, however, it had at least six progenitors: three French and three British. One of the British contingent was Julia Margaret Cameron's model, Sir John Herschel, a brilliant chemist who came up with the ideal fixative. What all of them had in common was the ambition of capturing the images in a camera obscura in permanent form.

William Henry Fox Talbot recalled that he conceived that idea when thinking about 'the inimitable beauty' of the images he saw in a pre-photographic camera — 'fairy pictures, creations of a moment and destined rapidly to fade away'. Thomas Wedgwood, son of the famous potter, had tried unsuccessfully to do the same thing in the 1790s.

This brings out a crucial point. Europeans were familiar with the images made by a camera for decades, indeed centuries, before 1839. In 1769 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, emphasising the candour of his *Confessions*, stressed that it was a 'portrait, not a book': 'I shall be working, as it were, in a camera obscura,' he added. 'No art is needed beyond that of tracing exactly the features I see there.' Clearly the notion that the



'May Day', 1866, by Julia Margaret Cameron

camera could not lie predated photography by at least 70 years.

Even in the 18th century others disputed the idea that images revealed by a camera were inherently truthful — and, of course, they were right. Any good image is likely to have been staged, like Cameron's portraits, more or less painstakingly. The way artists have done this will be the theme of an exhibition at Tate Modern next year, *Performing for the Camera*. Indeed, that phrase describes how many famous pictures have been taken.

Even among photographs purporting to

be documentary snapshots of real life a surprising number turn out to have been pre-arranged. This is — very probably — true of Robert Capa's 'Falling Soldier', which apparently captures the moment of death during the Spanish Civil War. Robert Doisneau's romantic image of postwar Paris, 'The Kiss', was discovered — more than 40 years after it was taken — to have been posed by two young actors.

When such 'faked' photographs are unmasked, there is usually an outcry. Making them is considered an immoral act,

even a sackable offence, in journalism. Perhaps we should relax; after all, no one makes a fuss about staging paintings. In this era of digital photography and Photoshop, most photographs have been more or less altered. As Hockney points out, there are numerous badly drawn photographs about. The border between the hand drawn and the photographic is utterly blurred; but then it always was.

Julia Margaret Cameron is at the V&A Museum until 21 February 2016.



Power tool: Elisabeth Frink carving 'Dorset Martyrs', c.1985

Sculpture

Lost in space

William Cook

In a converted barn in Dorset, not far from the rural studio where she made many of her greatest sculptures, Elisabeth Frink's son Lin is showing me his incredible collection of his mother's work. More than 20 years since his mother died, he's kept the vast bulk of it together. 'I owe it to mum,' he tells me. 'I've been very close to her.' We're surrounded by maquettes and plaster casts — shelves and shelves of them. Enormous figures loom over us, like Easter Island statues. Drawings and paintings (many never before seen in public) are stacked against the walls. There's a bust of Alec Guinness — a portrayal of immense power and clarity — and several busts of Frink herself, a robust and handsome woman as forceful as the

primeval figures in her sculptures. With her square jaw and severe gaze, she looks like an ancient warrior. 'Her work is so strong,' says Lin. That strength is reflected in her face.

Next week a selection of these majestic artworks will travel to the Djanogly Gallery in Nottingham for the biggest Frink exhibition in many years. Lots of them are already wrapped up, ready to be sent away. The curator of this show (and the curator of the Frink estate) Annette Ratuszniak has brought me here to see these works, and to meet Lin Jammet, Frink's only child. Lin has his mother's features, but his face has none of her warlike power. Compared with her, he seems almost feminine. He's a gentler figure by far.

Born in 1930, Frink was lauded in her lifetime. A CBE before she was 40, she ended up a Royal Academician, a Dame and a Companion of Honour, but since she died in 1993, cut off in her prime by cancer, her reputation has stalled. She doesn't have a dedicated gallery, like the Hepworth in Wakefield.

She doesn't have her own research centre, like the Henry Moore Institute in Leeds. Yet her work is far more approachable than Moore and Hepworth's abstractions. Her bold depictions of people and animals (especially horses) are accessible to allcomers. You don't need to be an aficionado to understand them, or enjoy them. So why isn't she venerated like Moore and Hepworth, as she should be? And will this new show give her timeless work a new lease of life?

One problem with Frink's work is that she's almost too ubiquitous. Sited in so many public places, her sculptures have faded into the urban landscape. Her 'Horse and Rider' on London's Dover Street (now dwarfed by Caffè Nero) is a perfect case in point. Commissioned to adorn so many desolate postwar developments (Harlow New Town, Paternoster Square...), her art has become synonymous with some of the worst aberrations of British architecture. Her creations have been obscured by the ugly mundanity of modern life.

More than any other art form, sculpture depends on context — and in the right context Frink's sculpture soars and sings. Her 'Walking Madonna', outside Salisbury Cathedral, is inspiring — and immensely popular. It's no surprise that so many of her best artworks are in churches. 'What she's

Sited in so many public places, Frink's creations have been obscured by the ugly mundanity of modern life

talking about is fundamental,' says Annette. Her final sculpture, 'Risen Christ', stands outside Liverpool's Anglican cathedral. Her crucifix adorns the altar of Liverpool's Catholic cathedral (like a lot of Britons, she has Anglican and Catholic roots). Her 'Dorset Martyrs' stand guard on Gallows Hill in Dorchester, where Protestant and Catholic dissenters were put to death. 'They change the sense of place — they alter the mood of the place,' adds Annette.

Frink was influenced by her adopted Dorset as well as her native Suffolk, but there's nothing parochial or provincial about her work. She also lived and worked in France, where the sharper light shaped the smoother contours of her later sculptures, and travelled to Australia, where the vivid colours of the landscape invigorated her mature artworks. 'She needed a big open space, and a sense of wildness around her,' says Annette.

We stop for a long time before 'Man and Baboon', a painting she made in 1990, which will feature in the exhibition. 'She's a fantastic draughtsman,' says Lin. So vibrant and full of life, it feels like a painting by a youngster. You'd never guess she was nearly 60 when she made it. With its blood red soil and bright blue sky, it seems to presage a new chapter in her career, a chapter that remained unwritten. 'This isn't a fading

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1925–2003



Lionel Bulmer *Christmas, 1958*

oil on board 103 x 156 cms 40½ x 61½ ins

Exhibition 25th November – 24th December

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MESSUM'S

strength — she isn't just an artist of the Fifties and Sixties, she's doing strong, interesting things throughout her whole working life,' says Annette.

Frink was only 62 when she died. 'She was so desperate to survive — I thought she was going to be OK,' says Lin. 'She was so determined. She worked until the very end.' Frink made more than 400 sculptures, virtually single-handed (unlike Moore or Hepworth, she never used assistants). 'Every day was a gift — she took full advantage of it,' reveals Lin. If she'd been granted another 20 years, who knows what she might have achieved? Her work sums up all that's best about British art. It's plain and unpretentious. It's about the things that we all share.

Her monumental figures have always attracted most attention but, as we leave the barn, the piece that arrests my eye is a small sculpture of a horse. 'She captures movement so well — that's really quite difficult in sculpture,' says Lin. 'There is a real sense of joy and delight,' concurs Annette. Outside, a chestnut mare is frolicking in the paddock. That's the great thing about Frink, I realise, as we say goodbye. Like all great artists, she makes you see the beauty in everyday things that you normally never notice. She makes you see the world around you in a slightly different way. Frink's reputation has been in the doldrums for far too long. It's ripe for a renaissance. The revival starts here.

Elisabeth Frink — *The Presence of Sculpture is at the Djanogly Gallery, Nottingham, from 25 November to 28 February 2016.*

Exhibitions

Death watch

John Laurenson

The King is Dead

Palace of Versailles, until 21 February 2016

At the beginning of the summer of 1715 Louis XIV complained of a pain in the leg. In mid-August gangrene set in and by 1 September he was dead. He'd been on the throne for 72 of his 77 years. A new exhibition at Versailles looks at the elaborate rituals that followed.

The Sun King died as he had lived — in public. Despite his illness, he carried on his daily routine until two days before his death, a decision made easier perhaps by the fact that he'd always conducted a good part of the affairs of France from his bedroom. It was no ordinary bedroom, and what went on there wasn't ordinary either. It is in the exact centre of the palace façade, so the view from his bed would have cut straight down the middle of the magnificent gilted approach to the palace he built, a line which is, not at

all coincidentally *bien sur*, the East–West axis of the sun.

Here, each day began with the 'lever du Roi'. Over a period of an hour and a half, the king was dressed and received visitors beginning with the most intimate — his brother, his son — and ending with more distant courtiers and lords. By the time he had his wig on his head and his sword fixed to his belt, and was pulling on his gloves, his bedroom would be full of people. Each day ended with the 'coucher du Roi', which was the same thing in reverse.

The day after the king's death, his body was cut open, divided into three parts (body, heart and entrails) and embalmed by doctors and surgeons in front of the principal officers of the court, before being placed in a coffin made of lead, which was placed in a coffin made of oak.

The practice of dividing dead French kings into three began with Philippe le Bel in 1314. The idea was that instead of one you could have three final resting places where people could come and pay homage (or, in more troubled times, desecrate the remains and pillage the metals). Louis's double coffin stood in Versailles for eight days.

In a departure from tradition, no funer-

al effigy was made. Previously, following a Roman practice revived by the English, a wicker effigy of the dead king had been made (in England it was made of wood) and to this were fixed a wax mask and wax hands moulded from the dead king's body.

The effigy was then dressed and sat up in bed where it received visits from mourners in place of the real body which, having started to reek, was enclosed in a coffin. A meal

The practice of dividing dead French kings into three began with Philippe le Bel in 1314

would be eaten in the company of the effigy during which it was served each course as if it were the living king. These effigies also played a big role in the funeral processions as they would be positioned on top of the dead kings' funeral carriages and paraded through the streets of Paris where the people would flock to see them. Louis XIV's father Louis XIII put an end to this practice, which he considered unacceptably pagan.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, women wore mourning white, but by the 18th century black was firmly established as the colour of mourning. With one exception — the king's



'La Mort de Louis XIII', 1731, by Jean-François de Troy



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heir. Louis XIV had spent much of his life feeling rather good about himself in respect to his succession. Unlike those poor Spanish Bourbons who had all sorts of problems making heirs, he had had six children with his wife Marie-Thérèse, two of whom were boys. But just before he died, things started to go wrong. His eldest son Louis, known as the Grand Dauphin, died in 1711, and the following year his eldest son, also called Louis, died too. But this was not before bringing into the world a son called Louis who died, a second son called Louis who died and a third son called Louis, who not only survived but also went on to give his name to a type of chair.

Back in 1715, though, on his great-grandfather's death, the future Louis XV, aged five, was not allowed to visit his dead relative, take part in his funeral procession or go to the funeral. And he didn't wear black; he wore purple. This was to signify that, although kings die, the king, if you get my meaning, does not.

The other mourners, who came to sprinkle holy water on dead Louis's coffin, wore black. Who wore what mourning attire was strictly regimented. The higher the rank of the mourner, the longer the train he was allowed to wear. The most important wore black trains five metres long.

Certain rooms in the Palace of Versailles were draped in black as were carriages. Servants wore black and so did the horses. As night set in on 8 September, Louis XIV's funeral procession left Versailles for the basilica at Saint Denis, the ancient burial place of French kings. The basilica — which today is in the middle of a neighbourhood where the population is almost entirely of African origin — contains the remains of all but three of the 70-odd kings that ruled France starting with Clovis in the 5th century.

We don't know why they chose to slow march those 12 hours of road at night. Perhaps it was the influence of Spain, where they'd developed a taste for night-time religious ritual. The effect, in any case, would have been dramatic. The procession was 2,500 people strong — many of them the king's guards, mounted and on foot, around the king's three metre-high funeral carriage surmounted with a large silver cross. At the front were 400 poor people, who were paid and dressed for the occasion in black cloaks with black hoods. All carried candles.

As they walked through the streets, with drummers keeping the slow, funereal beat, some in the crowds shouted insults as Louis's funeral coach rolled by. Many people in France were glad to see the back of France's longest-serving monarch.

The procession arrived at dawn at St Denis for the funeral where musicians played Philidor's Funeral March. The five metre-long ermine-lined cloak of blue velvet and gold fleurs-de-lys, his crown and the sword that had belonged to Charlemagne were placed upon the coffin. Inside were

placed models of his shield, his spurs, his sceptre, which symbolised authority, and his 'hand of justice', which symbolised the overseeing of order.

The body was buried at St Denis where it was dug up at the beginning of the Terror in 1793 and scattered along with the remains of other kings. The copper plaque identifying the coffin was pillaged and turned into a saucepan. Straightened out again, it is on display in the exhibition.

Louis's heart was put in the Jesuits'

church in the rue St Antoine, where looters also came during the Revolution and took the gold that encased it. Though this heart was destroyed, the exhibition contains three other royal hearts set in gold in the same way. Only the Sun King's embalmed innards remained undecorated by the Jacobins. A recent discovery allowed the identification of the exact location of the barrels containing the entrails of Louis XIV and his father at the foot of the steps to the sanctuary of Notre Dame Cathedral.



'Untitled', 1963, by Gillian Ayres

Approachable abstraction

Claudia Massie

Abstract Landscape

Whitworth, until 10 January 2016

Fifteen million pounds and a hefty slice of architectural vision have transformed the Whitworth from a fusty Victorian art temple into a sumptuous and thoroughly modern gallery. The space inside now channels the visitor from one gallery to another through split levels and along wide, glass-walled extensions. The great barrel-vaulted spaces at the gallery's core are now flooded with light from the opening up of the building into the park around it. The redevelopment has embraced the landscape surrounding the gallery and thinned the barrier between inside and out.

The transformation is impressive; the sense of space remarkable. The ground floor currently houses a huge assortment of exhibits including, among other things, many fine watercolours, a selection of portraits,

Richard Forster's hyper-realistic drawings and a display with the oddly punctuated title *Art_Textiles*, which includes all manner of surprising and entertaining work, from Do Ho Suh's cotton-embedded-in-paper drawings to warrior garb from Mali. Diverse and extensive, the Whitworth is a gallery to dip in and out of rather than trawl around in penitent servitude to a guidebook.

Upstairs, in a little space beside an extravagant installation by Bedwyr Williams, is an understated exhibition of abstract landscapes drawn from the gallery's own collection. It is one of the smaller displays in the current programme but a welcome one. While the absolutist abstraction of Rothko or Pollock continues to hold sway in the market and in the minds of curators and public alike, the kind of painting exhibited here has fallen from fashion in recent years.

This work, which is all British and dating from the 1950s and '60s, is painting that treads the edges of abstraction and figuration. Informed by reality, in this case by landscape, it is resonant stuff that allows the viewer to recognise and interpret elements.

It is approachable abstraction. The work on display is mostly painting but also includes some sculptural and textile pieces.

Two large hanging textiles by William Scott stand out. One is 'Skail', a tapestry made by Edinburgh Weavers from a design by Scott that was painted to scale with gouache and wax resist. The resulting work is a subtle mass of broken textured forms that hint at rock and edgelands. The work corresponds with its neighbour, 'Skara Brae', a length of screenprinted cotton also designed by Scott. This piece, printed in the colours of rock and lichen, speaks clearly of the sunken, stone-lined features of the ancient dwellings of Skara Brae in Orkney. It is an abstraction only until the viewer recognises the source of inspiration.

Scott himself was wary of the abstract label. 'I am an abstract artist in the sense that I abstract,' he said, before adding, 'I cannot be called non-figurative while I am still interested in the modern magic of space, primitive sex forms, the sensual and the erotic, disconcerting contours, the things of life.'

While Scott was specific in acknowledging the sources of his inspiration, Roger Hilton consciously attempted to distance the viewer from his. With work titled merely according to the date on which it was made, the viewer is undecided; abandoned to his own devices. This is no bad thing, for the joy

of abstract art is that it relies upon collaboration between artwork and viewer. With no narrative available, and precious little in the way of tangible motifs, the viewer must rely on instinct and feeling alone. The successful abstract will evoke an emotional response in the way that the best music does. Both surpass verbal description, communicating instead on a more fundamental emotional or even spiritual plane.

The viewer can bring what they like to Roger Hilton's work but the reductive titling technique will still lead them in

It treads the edges of abstraction and figuration, allowing the viewer to recognise and interpret elements

a certain direction. So here we see 'March 1961', a loose, scrawly gathering of shapes in blacks, browns and ochres that imply a horizon, punctured in the lower half, or foreground, by a thick blob of white. If that's not the late winter remains of snow on a rutted landscape then I don't know what is.

Bryan Wynter's 'Earth's Riches', a tumbling cascade of brushwork and muted colour is yet more distanced from the figurative. Like a deconstructed, soft-stroke Léger, there is something systematic and almost mechanical in the piece. The colour is that of autumn but shot through with water and

rustled by wind. It is a rhythmic painting full of movement and elemental energy.

Gillian Ayres, now 85 and still working, is represented by two contrasting early pieces. 'Reef' is a long thin painting that carries the viewer with the swell of the sea into a foamy cloud of white, while 'Untitled' is a mixed-media drawing. While 'Reef' is an obvious study of ocean, the untitled piece, an accumulation of circles, dots, dashes and flat plains of colour, is as far removed from the literal landscape as anything in this show. It sings out loud, however, and the careful balance of composition, which crowds towards the right and uses empty space as a tool in itself, whirls the viewer around in an exuberant vortex of suggested form. The marks are alive with the energy of the infant, informed by the acuity of the observer.

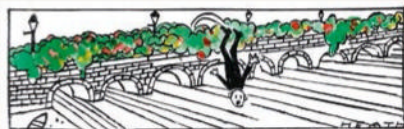
Two spare and delicate Victor Pasmore screenprints that play on the tension of spaces between pulsating forms are a pleasure to see but the one small Peter Lanyon piece on display underplays both his contribution to the genre and his presence in the Whitworth collection. There are many more abstract landscapes hidden away in that 55,000-strong collection and it is tempting to imagine the rewards of a more ambitious and comprehensive exhibition. This little amuse-bouche should whet everyone's appetite.

Thomas Heatherwick is the most famous designer in the United Kingdom today and has an unquestionable flair for attention-grabbing creations. Before 2010 he was mostly known for a splashy public sculpture in Manchester, 'B of the Bang' (2005). Within weeks bits started to fall off. In 2009 it was dismantled. This was his most celebrated failure. But he has had others. An even earlier commission, 'Blue Carpet' (2002), a showy repaving of a miserable part of Newcastle city centre, lost its colouring completely within a decade (despite assurances from Heatherwick that its colour would last for 'a 100 years').

He was propelled to global celebrity in 2012 when an audience of a billion watched his Olympic cauldron light up. His 204 metallic petals, lit by white-robed epebes, created a global sigh and a single flaming Olympic flower. A centrepiece of Danny Boyle's opening ceremony, it gave rise to an intellectual-property dispute over a startlingly similar design, ultimately settled by LOCOC although fiercely disputed by Heatherwick himself.

All this pizzazz has brought him increasingly ambitious commissions from richer and richer clients from California (corporate HQ) to Singapore (a university) to Dubai (an underground park).

THE HECKLER Thomas Heatherwick



Fiercely critical of what he sees as a quintessentially British talent for cynicism and fear, he has become a walking TED talk: relentless in his positivity but blind to the social criticism that goes with becoming the can-do designer in an era of intense wealth polarisation. It is unsurprising that his brand of design, with its strong wow factor and skin-deep social content, should be so popular with tax-avoiding corporations and states built on slave labour.

Heatherwick has also become the quintessential designer for 21st-century London, a rather different client. At the same time as his Olympic cauldron was bursting into flame, his new Routemaster buses were unleashed on the city. Gloriously wacky to look at, they have proved cramped and susceptible to overheating. A row over whether windows should open or not has led to a £2 million refit of the fleet and the get-on, get-off feature that attracted so many people has all but been

dropped. They are also very expensive.

But they are not the only expensive project he is proposing for London. Vying with the 800-strong fleet of buses on cost is the proposed Garden Bridge. Inspired in part by the success of New York's High Line, a green walkway made out of a former elevated rail track on stilts, the bridge's current budget is five times the square-foot cost of the High Line. The projected cost has risen from £60 million to £175 million with a £3.5 million annual running cost. Even on that budget there is a £30 million funding shortfall and doubtless the costs will rise in the construction. Work is slated to begin in January.

Heatherwick describes the Garden Bridge as something we are giving to ourselves but is increasingly set on steam-rolling opposition from Lambeth Council and others (which he recently described as 'ludicrous and devastating' in the *Standard*). His principal concern must be the mayoral election. But to rush this underfunded white elephant through is to get one over on London. And London is not Dubai or Google. Our pockets are not limitless, we live in an age of cuts; public debate and criticism are sacred to us and if we have to pamper ourselves most of us don't book into a suite at Claridge's.

— Jack Wakefield

Music

Bored by Brahms

Damian Thompson

Brahms's Clarinet Quintet begins, writes his biographer Jan Swafford, with 'a gentle, dying-away roulade that raises a veil of autumnal melancholy over the whole piece: the evanescent sweet-sadness of autumn, beautiful in its dying'.

This being late autumn, I listened to the quintet on Sunday to see if its 'distillation of Brahmsian yearning' still made an overwhelming impression on me. It did. I swear these are the most miserable 35 minutes in classical music.

One critic refers admiringly to the display of 'every super-refined shade of silver-grey regret'. But that's the problem. The ageing Brahms — obese, cantankerous, his spirits lowered by the deaths of friends and undiagnosed cancer — sets about depressing his audience with the precision of a genius (which he was). No sooner has the clarinet soared than it finds a clever way to snake down the stave, slithering through the elegant droopy twiddling of the strings. Every movement sounds much the same to me, but that's a heresy that lovers of the work — and they are countless — think they can refute just by pointing at the score, where Brahms tweaks the counterpoint and crops the phrases so that there's always something new happening.

And so the old boy gets away with forcing his mood on us, whereas when Mahler does it we wince at his self-pity. That's fine if you're into the heavy wistfulness of late Brahms chamber music. I loathe it, not just because it strikes me as spiritually empty but because the composer's superlative craftsmanship ensures that every bar is drenched in despair. Nobody could describe the Clarinet Quintet as an uneven work.

Craftsmanship can be dangerous for musicians. Its relationship to inspiration is complicated. There are composers — Teleman, Rimsky-Korsakov, perhaps Richard Strauss — whose contrapuntal fluency or mastery of the orchestra fails to disguise thin material. There's the sad case of Mendelssohn, of whom it's been said that he was born a genius and died a fine composer. He was 16 when he wrote his incomparable Octet, after which his inspiration faded but his technical facility didn't; the late Violin Concerto marks a return to form, but not to the form of the Octet — to my ears it's tainted by that close relation of craftsmanship, good taste.

With Brahms, you're venturing into difficult territory, not least because his devotees think anyone who criticises him must be tone-deaf or a secret fan of Karl Jenkins. They're ruder in my experience than Wagnerians, who are used to hearing their idol

being trashed. They insist that Brahms's craftsmanship reached wondrous levels but was always at the service of increasingly subtle ideas. Moreover, he was a visionary — Schoenberg, no less, said his asymmetrical phrases made him 'progressive'.

Maybe so, but it's not the whole picture. The Second Piano Concerto is certainly innovative (e.g., four movements instead of three) but its close-knit subtlety makes it — heresy alert — more boring than its predecessor. The finale of the Fourth Symphony is a tightly argued passacaglia, a fact that surprises musicologists far more than it does audiences; I listen to it dutifully, whereas the blazing finale of the First has me on the edge of my seat. The craftsmanship of the Fourth never lets up, and the result is a work that — like the Clarinet Quintet — verges on monotony.

There's a supremely professional evenness about late Brahms that, alas, really is prophetic. The cult of craftsmanship is the curse of modern classical music. Brahms can't take all the blame for it; 20th-centu-

The cult of craftsmanship is the curse of modern classical music

ry composers didn't want to ape his unsexy mannerisms — yet, without realising it, they inherited his cast of mind.

Schoenberg, who thought Brahms was such a pioneer, turned evenness into doctrine with his 12-tone technique. Tonal composers achieved dreary consistency by different means: there are symphonies by Sibelius, Vaughan Williams, Prokofiev, Shostakovich and dozens of lesser contemporaries in which uniformity of style can make you lose track of which movement you're in. Minimalism? Don't get me started. And nine out of ten 21st-century chamber and symphonic works are so 'subtle', however extreme their dynamics, that they're unmemorable even if you've followed the composer's conceited programme notes.

It's at times like this that I yearn for Schumann or early Bruckner, who were so carried away by their ideas that they can sound like self-taught amateurs. They'd never get away with it today. Rough-hewn or untidy music is 'unprofessional' and might lose you a commission. And so concertgoers are con-

demned to yet more intricate 'soundscapes' that, for all their craftsmanship, are little more than management jargon set to music.

Dance

Ménage à trois

Ismene Brown

Rambert Dance

The Lowry; Sadler's Wells; and touring

Scottish Ballet

Edinburgh Festival Theatre

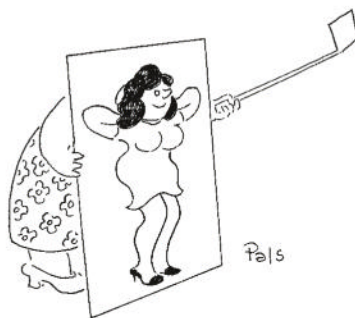
Mark Baldwin, artistic director of Rambert Dance, must take responsibility for most of the good times I've had recently, midwife to a litter of excellent things born out of curiosity and an unfussed love of culture, particularly music. A true artistic director (cf my complaint last time).

On to the creative table at Rambert HQ this year he has thrown ideas about brass bands, a Picasso painting, something challengingly old-school for the Rambert orchestra to play, a new commissioned score or two, a bold, even foolhardy, decision to declare the Rolling Stones passé and say goodbye to Christopher Bruce's popular but now irredeemably dated *Rooster*.

Much intelligent trust lay behind Baldwin's commissions to Kim Brandstrup and Didy Veldman, unveiled over the past month. To one he offered a master score — Schoenberg's 1899 *Verklärte Nacht* — to the other a master painting — Picasso's 1925 'The Three Dancers'. While obviously there'd be homework for the audience, the projects were helpfully linked. Both score and picture have tragic love triangles implicated in their subject, so comparison was inevitable when they were premièred in Salford and at Sadler's Wells this month.

Brandstrup romps away with full honours. His *Transfigured Night* is a haunting, emotionally piercing masterpiece, one of the finest that this outstanding choreographer has ever made, the reward of maturity. He reworks Schoenberg's original inspiration, Richard Dehmel's poem about a woman who tells her lover she is pregnant by another man, into a three-part imagining of the outcome. First, the confrontation and her rejection by the horrified man; then, the dream of might-have-been; finally, the future, in which we're invited to speculate that the man's need of the woman may manage to overcome his sense of betrayal, for the moment.

What works well on the page doesn't always translate, but Brandstrup has a masterly eye for space, a painter's eye, or a film director's. He has a single pillar to the left, decisively lit by Fabiana Piccioli to create a psychic boundary between the conscious and unconscious, and he deploys with a bril-



liant psychic sense a large shadowy ensemble of dancers behind the protagonists, who enact or express their thoughts in seething flights of movement.

This enables tall blonde Simone Damberg Würtz and dark, compact Miguel Altunaga to embody the physical frigidity that expresses their situation outwardly, glancingly evoking Egon Schiele — while their doubts and hopes are darting dangerously over the floor and in the air via the extraordinary ensemble. And in the wistful middle section, a second couple blithely dances as if all can be forgiven, with Dane Hurst turning wonderfully light handstands and tumbles. Heartstopping.

The small Rambert orchestra plays its hearts out under Paul Hoskins for this superb dancework. All their musicianly zeal, though, can't rescue the cerebral tedium of Veldman's *The 3 Dancers*, saddled with a grunting score by Elena Kats-Chernin. Veldman doggedly recomposes Picasso's oddly angled limbs with two threesomes, in white and black, under stylish shards of perspex, but the steady heavyfootedness in the interlockings, the deadening music, the dryness of it, all seem to me utterly at odds with the artwork.

One's taste is one of the rogue variables, of course. Both Kats-Chernin and Gabriel Prokofiev, composer of Shobana Jeyasingh's intricate, intriguing recent Rambert creation *Terra Incognita*, favour chugging gruffness over lyricism, which I hate to see in a dance context. Whereas Gavin Higgins's brass band commission for Mark Baldwin's *Dark Arteries* — which I had another look at up in Salford — is an ambitious, deliciously theatrical musical experience that infuses Baldwin's sober, fatalistic dance with humour, and deserves concert-hall life.

I'd forgotten, as I revelled in Javier de Frutos's *Elsa Canasta*, the hit of Scottish Ballet's autumn mixed bill in Edinburgh, that it was first brought to life by Baldwin's discerning directorial instincts in 2003. De Frutos spotted in a Cole Porter biography that Porter had once composed a ballet score that Diaghilev rejected, and he went to Rambert to find the music and make a ballet. His new version for Scottish Ballet of this super-sexy, cabaret-style lark for young lovers on a swirl of stairs has taken on a subtler sophistication. (Once again, a tribute to artistic intuition, this time Scottish's director Christopher Hampson's.)

Certain contrasts have been fruitfully refined. The singer's no longer one of the gang; tubby, bald, middle-aged, sour-voiced Nick Holder is a lost oddball among the streams of vibrant young girls and boys who dash up and down Jean-Marc Puissant's clean 1920s staircase, snogging and gossiping, disappearing to the bar, or maybe into golden immortality. They pour up and down in amusingly risqué combinations and recombinations, gleefully diving off the stairs into

passing hands in daredevil aerobatics.

De Frutos seasons the mayfly dance delectably with echoes of Balanchine's *Apollo* and Scottish's dancers respond wittily to the ballet references. But the erotic fun is now shadowed with anxiety, and Holder's hoarse singing of 'So In Love' made my eyes prick. Emotion slices sideways into the heart with a laugh, and aching musical precision. I wonder what De Frutos would have done with Picasso's 'Three Dancers'.

Cinema

Sins of the fathers

Deborah Ross

My Nazi Legacy

PG, Key Cities and on demand at Curzon Home Cinema

This is a documentary in which three men travel across Europe together, but they're not pleasurably interrailing, even though there are often times they probably wished they were. For two of them, Niklas and Horst, the journey is about confronting their fathers, who were high-ranking Nazi officials responsible for the deaths of millions of Jews, while for the third, the emi-

nant British human-rights lawyer Philippe Sands, it means visiting the place where his grandfather's family was exterminated. This place, Galicia, which straddles the modern-day border between Poland and Ukraine, is the exact place my own grandmother's family were murdered. Her father lost every one of his seven siblings. She lost every aunt, uncle and cousin. And so I would wish to ask

The Nazis are still revered in the Galician part of Ukraine, because they took up arms against Russia

Niklas and Horst what Sands does ask Niklas and Horst: how do you feel about your father being this sort of man? It is a horribly gripping question, just as this is a horribly gripping film.

Sands was writing a book about international law, and its origins in the Nuremberg trials, when he first came across Niklas and Horst, who are now in their seventies. Niklas is the son of Hans Frank, who was governor-general of Nazi-occupied Poland, which came to include Galicia. He was known as 'the butcher of Poland'. Horst is the son of Otto von Wächter, one of Hans's deputies and governor of Krakow and then Galicia. Between 1939 (when both Niklas and Horst were born) and 1945, they were basically mass murdering by day and

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returning to their families in the evening. But while one son accepts what his father was, the other will not, and therein lies the riveting tension.

In a way, Niklas has it the most easy, as hating his father was never much of an effort. You suspect he'd have hated his father even if his father had only ever been a fish-monger. Hans was cold and cruel. Hans, for some years, even denied Niklas was his. Niklas has no problem condemning his father absolutely. 'I despise him,' he says. 'He was a coward,' he says. His father disgusts him so totally that, at all times, he carries a photograph of his dead body, taken moments after he was hanged at Nuremberg, 'so I can see justice was done'.

Horst? Horst is Austrian rather than German, which speaks volumes, as Austria has never faced up to the role it played. (Once went to Austria; it is quite creepy.) Horst had a good childhood. Horst shows Sands a photograph album and although Sands sees monsters on every page, including Hitler and Himmler, Horst sees only happy times. Horst does not deny the Holocaust, but refuses to believe that his father was directly involved. It was 'the system', he keeps saying, and 'the system is something we today cannot imagine'.

They travel to childhood homes, to burned-out synagogues, and finally to Lviv, formerly in Galicia, now in Ukraine. This is where, on 25 March 1943, under the instruction of Frank and von Wächter, 4,000 Jews were rounded up from the ghetto, marched into the woods, and shot by the Gestapo. Their bodies are still in the ground. This is where the family of Sands's grandfather lies, and the family of my grandmother too. 'You're not responsible,' says Sands, 'but your father signed off on this.' 'My father wouldn't have,' says Horst. Niklas says, angrily, 'Your father was involved in this terrible crime in this terrible place. Accept it.' Horst just stands there, tearing at a flower in his hand.

There are no *Act of Killing*-style breakdowns, despite Sands's best efforts. He brandishes paperwork. He loses his temper. He challenges Horst, who is otherwise genial (irritatingly), to the point where it feels like bullying. As Horst was too young ever to be complicit, why is it important that he owns up to his father's criminality? There is one scene that answers that. The Nazis are still revered in the Galician part of Ukraine, because they took up arms against Russia. There is even an annual celebration of the Waffen-SS Galizien Division, where attendees dress up in SS uniforms, complete with swastikas. The three are filmed at this event, where Horst, once his identity is disclosed, is treated as a hero. 'Your father,' he is even told, by someone with his arm round him, 'was a decent man.' Horst beams. Horst, for the first time, looks so proud. And that's why it matters, I suppose.



Judi Dench (Paulina) and Kenneth Branagh (Leontes) in *'The Winter's Tale'*

Theatre

Winter wonderland

Lloyd Evans

The Winter's Tale; All On Her Own/Harlequinade

Garrrick Theatre, until 16 January 2016

Kenneth Branagh opens his West End tenancy with Shakespeare's inexplicably popular *The Winter's Tale*. We start in Sicily where Leontes and his queen Hermione are entertaining Polixenes, the king of Bohemia. The design is heavily Germanic. Crimson drapes shroud the grey marble columns. A massive fir tree, twinkling with candlelight, is rooted in an ornamental toboggan. Everyone swishes about in thick, elegant Victorian costumes. The sets, by Christopher Oram, aren't just lovely to look at, their detailed perfection is almost heartbreaking. And Neil Austin's lighting would have won gasps of admiration from David Lean.

The only fault is that it all seems over-contrived. An orchestral score intensifies the emotional colouring but it makes the play feel like a film. And would Hermione, nine months pregnant, really go figure-skating with Polixenes? The palace backs onto a frozen lake where the two athletes careen this way and that, arm in arm. They even execute a faultless U-turn in the wings. Then everything goes weird. Leontes succumbs to an inexplicable fit of paranoid jealousy. He imprisons Hermione and orders his steward to bump off Polixenes, thus destroying his dynasty and his reputation at a stroke. Branagh's range isn't really suited to a tragic monster like Leontes. At a normal conversational pitch he can act as well as anyone but at the extremes of emotion he borrows devices pioneered elsewhere. He does the

Olivier bark — 'out!' — when shunning his newborn daughter. He does the Anthony Hopkins hand of shame — eyes shielded by trembling fingers — when exposed to the consequences of his murderous rage. He gives us the John Hurt bewildered tortoise routine when surrendering to deep remorse. And he responds to his son's death with the famous Brando howl: fists clenched, head tossed back, voice hurled into the gantry. These elaborate emulations are outclassed by the simplicity of Judi Dench, whose clear-headed Paulina dares to challenge the mad king. He threatens to immolate her. 'I care not,' she says, 'it is an heretic that makes the fire not she which burns in't.' At the end of

Branagh's elaborate emulations are outclassed by the simplicity of Judi Dench

this scene she nearly won an ovation, which would have disturbed the rhythm of the play and annoyed the rest of the cast (who, more annoyingly, would have felt obliged to congratulate her backstage while she expressed her surprise and embarrassment).

In the second half, we move to Bohemia for a long rustic love story which, as usual, is too chock-full of forced merriment to please the rational observer. Then we return to Sicily, where the palace has turned white with grief. The crimson armchairs are drained of their colour. Branagh's ashen beard and Tippexed quiff now match the ice-encrusted palace walls. The visuals, again, are stunning. And the statue business (when Hermione is resurrected from a sculpture) is so well done that it almost seems 5 per cent believable. The figurine is curtained off in a gaudy little kiosk, which is exactly how a tyrant would house a kitsch masterpiece. And the sculpture itself, with spreading swirls of fabric incorporated into the pedestal, looks like a real statue.

Branagh has produced a better version of this tricky play than any I can recall and its beautifully rendered externals are exquisite.

All On Her Own by Terence Rattigan is a curious monologue written for TV in 1968. Zoë Wanamaker plays a sozzled widow recalling her millionaire husband who may have taken his own life. Wanamaker looks fabulous in a pencil skirt and a brunette hairdo so finely shaped and delicately illuminated that it might be the work of Vermeer. But the underdeveloped piece lacks a dramatic climax and I expect its true purpose was to convince Wanamaker to take a cameo in the companion piece, *Harlequinade*, also by Rattigan, in which she plays a lush actress appearing as the Nurse in a touring production of *Romeo and Juliet*.

This is a backstage comedy featuring a couple of ageing stars, the Gosports, who are so committed to Shakespeare that they carry on rehearsing while various disasters threaten to overwhelm them. A vintage actor quits the company leaving a nervy young ham to fill the gap. The stage manager resigns under pressure from his fiancée but the Gosports are delighted by the glamour and excitement of their romance. When a mysterious girl shows up claiming to be Arthur Gosport's long-lost daughter he invites her to audition for his next show. Branagh's pragmatic intelligence is ideal for this sort of ironic trifle. The result is a joyously sophisticated knock-about comedy with barely a beat missed or a laugh overlooked.

Prices for the Branagh experience may be high but I guarantee that these plays, with their large casts and their sky-high production values, are being done for love alone. No one's making a penny here.

Opera

All at sea

Igor Toronyi-Lalic

Morgen und Abend

Royal Opera House, in rep until 28 November

Biedermann and the Arsonists

Lilian Baylis Studio

The Royal Opera House seemed nervous about Georg Friedrich Haas's world premiere *Morgen und Abend*. They sent out a pdf of the libretto in advance, which they only ever do when they think that the words or the plot are unintelligible. Thrilled to report that it was a double whammy.

An introductory soliloquy was spoken by actor Klaus Maria Brandauer. He's apparently an Austrian national treasure. I'm not sure he'd get a part in *Hollyoaks* here. He wobbled on to the stage in wellies, paunch, beard and alcoholic's nose. He was the spit

in fact of Ricky Tomlinson in *The Royle Family*, except he said things like 'he'll be alone for ever alone', instead of 'my arse', which coincidentally were very close to my feelings that evening.

At this point I'm traditionally meant to elucidate the plot — which is quite hard when there isn't a plot. One depressed Norwegian fisherman, Olai, gives birth to another depressed Norwegian fisherman, Johannes. Johannes goes fishing. The end. There is also the appearance of a dead fisherman Peter, a friend. He has long, wavy blond hair. Your head thinks Grimes; your eyes see Stringfellow. Either way Johannes is rightly wary of getting into the boat with him.

A meditation on life and death, some have called it. A pretentious waste of time is, I imagine, how most punters will find it. Not that that's ever stopped opera. If the lack of a decent story were a barrier to success, the operatic repertoire would be virtually non-existent. Trust the music, we're meant to think in this sort of emergency. Well, I'm afraid that won't get you far.

Haas is often lumped in with a group of composers called the Spectralists, so called because they turned to the spectrum of overtones that reside within each note (a bit like how the colour spectrum lurks within each beam of white light) as a starting point for compositional explorations. Anxious

musical bigwigs love Spectralism as it offers a way out of the atonal modernist cul-de-sac (as they see it) by reintroducing tonality by a theoretical sleight of hand. It's a musical third way. It's probably why the Blairite Simon Rattle so loves it.

The problem is Haas doesn't do nearly as much as he could or should with this language (certainly not as much as Gérard Grisey or Horatiu Radulescu did with the same

A pretentious waste of time is how most punters will find it. Not that that's ever stopped opera

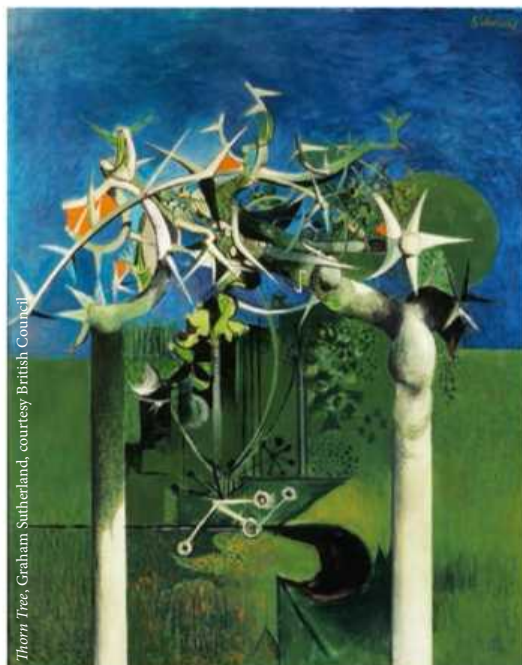
means). Instead he smears the sound till it resembles an ice rink on which he lets the vocal lines slip and slide inconsequentially. It sounded like the stuff Penderecki and Ligeti were messing around with 60 years ago.

Graham Vick directs. Dreadfully. Take Vick out of his Birmingham warehouses (where he leads the inspiring Birmingham Opera Company), and put him into an opera house and he becomes deadly. The singers mainly float around tasteful white furniture like jellyfish playing musical chairs. There are times in fact when the music starts displaying abstract expressionist intentions — moving in textural blocks of sound: now smudged, now sweeping up, now down — where one thinks maybe Vick

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is the real culprit. His failure to realise that the music is dealing (however derivatively) with geometry and process and not realism is what sinks the night.

Yet the singing is excellent. Which is revealing. Blind, illiterate opera administrators think that all opera needs is a few pretty-sounding gobs. This way lies oblivion.

It is in fact the kind of opera that gives opera a bad name. Ignore it. Save your money. And invest instead (the next time it's in town) in a fantastic new chamber opera from Simon Vosecek and the brilliant Independent Opera company that stirs up two of the rarest commodities in opera: laughter and thought.

Biedermann and the Arsonists is based on Max Frisch's terrific 1953 political parable *The Firestarters* in which a couple of toffs aid and abet two oiks in the burning down of their posh house convinced that what the hoodlums openly admit to doing can't be what they really want to do. The characters are pure Max Beckmann, the plot pure Labour party.

Leigh Melrose and Matthew Hargreaves play the Corbynite tweedledee and tweedledum with tremendous comic timing. Vosecek delivers an excellent, jittery score that echoes the fleet-of-foot nature of the characters — their deception and self-deception. Max Höhn's lively direction is all-condemning. 'Give us matches,' one oik politely asks the toff, 'as a sign of your trust in us.' Michael Billington next to me took it as a tale of middle-class guilt; I took it as a warning of Jezza-mania. Ambidextrous, teasing, tense: it has it all.

Television

The man who wouldn't be king Jasper Rees

Not that long ago the BBC trumpeted a new Stakhanovite project to big up the arts in its many and various hues. And praise be, this it is jolly well doing with all sorts of dad rock docs, homages to painters and poets, while Sralan Yentob (as he surely ought at the very least to be, and soon) continues to knock frock-coated on doors like a highly remunerated person from Porlock.

Before multichannels and multi-platforms, great arts coverage was (if memory serves) done without much song and dance. Lest we forget, Yentob was once a progenitor of *Arena*. Long the haven of burgeoning filmmakers such as Mary Harron, James Marsh and some bloke called Scorsese, *Arena* is 40 this month and it's still the best. If you know what's good for you, watch *Night and Day*, its typically oblique trawl through its own archive on BBC Four this Sunday.

But there's still good stuff elsewhere. In

the quivering bubble that is the arts, the deselection of Mark Lawson as *Front Row*'s head chef caused a minor kerfuffle. My own view is that his radio interviews were growing grandly self-referential. By contrast, his hour-long encounter with David Hare on BBC Four (Sunday) had room to spread out, and was a reminder of how little breathable one-on-one conversation makes it on to television these days. Whatever you make of the plays, Hare knows how to charm the birds from the trees in reasoned paragraphs. Also he persuasively embedded the story of his postwar upbringing — and promotion via a scholarship to the middle classes — into the wider story of Britain's slow, anxious unbuttoning between 1945 and 1970, which is roughly when he started writing plays. He was candid, albeit unapologetic, about his capacity for causing irritation, 'a quality in me over which I can do very lit-

Mark Lawson's one-on-one with David Hare was television unafraid to mimic the virtues of radio

tle'. This was television unafraid to mimic the virtues of radio.

Proper documentary is an expensive and amorphous form, often ill fitted to the rigid hour-long slots of today's gridded schedules. Therefore give thanks for *Storyville*, where elegantly crafted feature-length documentaries come home to roost on television. Its latest was *Orion: The Man Who Would Be King* (Monday), made by Jeanie Finlay with the support of Creative England and Ffilm Cymru. This was a very fine arts film about a singer you (by whom I mean I) have never heard of.

Jim Ellis, who later traded as Mr Excitement, the Cadillac Man and Steven Silver, was better known as Orion. His sort of heyday came when Elvis had eaten his last peanut-butter burger. A nation giving credence to UFOs and Creationism was ready to suck up a conspiracy theory that the king still lived. Ellis, a lantern-jawed Alabama lunk who'd already had one crack at a recording career in Los Angeles, was loitering in Nashville, his calling card a voice that was spookily similar to Presley's, as was the sculpted quiff.

It so happened that an author called Gail Brewer-Giorgio had penned a fantasy novel about a rock'n'roll idol named Orion who was just pretending to be dead. Her book, and Ellis's voice, both came to the attention of Shelby Singleton, a music impresario and the most sued man in Tennessee. He took the pair of them for a ride. Brewer-Giorgio merely lost her copyright. Ellis lost his whole identity. The career he'd always craved was his, so long as he agreed to perform in a mask and never take it off in public.

This was a southern gothic parable about the lawless frontier of the music industry. Naturally, it ended badly. Ellis was shot back in Alabama by a passing gunman,

his life snuffed out early just like the star he hated impersonating. His ghost haunted the film in the shape of an old phone interview, while a gargoyles' gallery of wall-eyed lard buckets and other good ol' boys remembered the sad tale of the man who wouldn't be king, a wannabe crooner trapped in a media construct more exploitative than even the grimmest glint in the Svengalian eye of Simon Cowell.

Ellis barely made a bean, although there were tawdry fringe benefits: lashings of motel tumbles with itinerant groupies, from whom he gathered a library of gynaecological polaroids for private use. 'He got a picture of every ... Lucy is what I call mine,' recalled a trim-looking fan in her fifties called Sharon Attaway Nettleton. 'How did he know whose was whose?' She didn't say if he took his mask off in bed. The minute he did in public, his career died.

Ellis's yearning for identity was thwarted at birth: fostered at two, adopted at five, he never knew who he really was even without his mask. But he was the spit of Presley's father Vernon, which perhaps explained why he sounded like Vernon's son. The icing on the cake of this melancholy film would have been a DNA test revealing all. We met Ellis's son Jimmy Jnr, a dignified hick with a Bammy accent straight out of *Forrest Gump*. Lisa Marie Presley, potentially his first cousin, may not have felt inclined to spit into a tube.

Radio

French connection Kate Chisholm

It was as if Andrew Marr and his guests on *Start the Week* on Monday morning were standing on the edge of a precipice with no idea how far they would fall if they strayed too near the edge. Their conversation this week, Marr told us, would not, as usual, be a live discussion but had actually been recorded in Paris on Friday, just hours before the terrible events of later that evening. Their discussion, quite coincidentally, was focused on French history, society and identity as part of a new Radio 4 season inspired by the great 20-volume series of novels by Émile Zola, which create a fictionalised record of life in France at the turn of the last century. (Later on Monday, Glenda Jackson, the former actress and MP, introduced a feature programme about Zola as a backdrop to the forthcoming three-part dramatisation of the novels, in which she is going to play a leading part, her first acting role for decades.) But Marr and his guests — two novelists, a historian and a journalist, of French, British and Arab-French extraction — would make no mention of what had just happened

because they had no clue of what Paris was about to witness. Should we still hear it?

Marr said Radio 4 had decided to go ahead, and wisely too. The conversation was not in the least redundant or anachronistic. On the contrary, it was unexpectedly gripping precisely because his guests were attempting to give us their understanding of where France stood at that time and how it had got there without any agenda. Mention was made of a society divided between Catholic right and secular left, between those of generational French descent and those whose parents and grandparents were immigrants, of the war in Algeria and the chaotic way in which France had got rid of its colonies. We also heard about the legacy of the French Resistance, which was in large part organised from outside the country rather than from within. But all this was said in the context of trying to understand what it means to be French now, without knowing that the country was on the edge of a precipice. Their discussion was not affected by trauma but was rather intent on meaning, on rational inquiry. This made it all much more meaningful. As Agnès Desarthe said, quoting Racine, 'My ills began much earlier,' before warning us, presciently, that in France everybody 'is shutting down instead of shouting up'.

Another conversation of a different dimension but no less gripping was to

be heard on Friday afternoon in Nalini Chetty's smart two-hander *Puellae — Or the Truth About Chips and Other Things* (directed by Bruce Young). Don't be put off by the pretentious title, 'puellae' referring to the Latin for girls. Tess (played by the author) and Neve (Samara MacLaren), old schoolfriends, have met up in an Edinburgh wine bar and over a glass or two of Pinot Grigio begin dissecting a friendship that began when they were both teenage girls at school. Now they have grown

Should we still hear what had been recorded before the terrible events of later that evening?

apart: Tess in London pursuing her dream to become an artist, Neve about to get married, complete with huge 'rock', big mortgage and a safe bet as a husband. Not much happens in words, yet an awful lot is said in a play that shows just how much can be conveyed on radio in a 45-minute sketch. Who hasn't experienced that 'homecoming minefield', knowing you will end up questioning yourself on how much progress you have made? Or become painfully aware of how much has changed when looking at an old photograph?

The World Service's annual *100 Women* festival, celebrating the achievements of

women across the continents, was launched this week with the first in a documentary series looking at the experiences of three generations of immigrant women from Bangladesh, Jamaica, Poland and Nigeria. How settled do they feel? How do they explain their identity? In *Home* Aasmah Mir talked to Shaheen Choudhury Westcombe, who arrived in Britain in 1972 from Bangladesh, a trained architect who never intended to stay but who now works in community projects here and in Bangladesh, to 44-year-old Shamshia Ali, who was brought up in Darlington and Sylhet and sees herself at home in both places, and to 27-year-old Shanaz Begum who lives in Tower Hamlets and teaches at the Mulberry School where 98 per cent of pupils are of Bengali descent.

Shaheen, who grew up in Bangladesh just after Partition when 'the hallmarks of the British Raj could still be seen', read Dickens as a girl, spoke English fluently, and felt as if London was familiar to her when she arrived. Yet she remembered how people would stare at her, and one man tapped her on the shoulder and told her, 'Paki, go home.' She replied, 'First of all I'm not a Paki and secondly, yes, I will go home. I haven't come here to stay. I will go home after 200 years because the British went to our country for 200 years.'

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The Grand Tour

By Ian Thomson

The Grand Tour usually culminated with Naples, ragamuffin capital of the Italian south, where Vesuvius offered a visual education in the grand style. Some Grand Tourists, among them Lord Byron, got as far as Greece; but Italy was coveted as the glittering birthplace of the Renaissance — a haven of art on the Arno. In some ways, then, Britain became civilised through its contact with Italy. 'A man who has not been to Italy,' Samuel Johnson observed in 1776 (perhaps ironically), 'is always conscious of an inferiority.'

The grand habit of touring the Continent for its art and classical antiquity flourished from the mid-17th century until the advent of rail transport in the 1840s. Though trains were often of a biblical slowness and unreliability (not least in Italy), they spelled the end of solitary aristocratic travel. The Grand Tour was overwhelmingly the preserve of nobility and landed gentry. Accompanied by a Cicerone (scholarly guide), young men embarked on their educational rite of passage through the gracious suavities of Paris and on south across the Alps to Italy, where the liquid softness of the Mediterranean worked on them like a soporific.

Today, sadly, Naples serves merely as a springboard for those visiting the lava-trapped civilisations of Pompeii and Herculaneum. Tourists are put off by the presence



View of the Bay of Naples, 1832

of the Neapolitan Mafia — the Camorra — and the dark, corridor-like streets strewn with litter. Naples always did have a disreputable edge. (A Neapolitan gambling manual advises: 'Rule Number One — always try to see your opponent's cards.')

Without the crowds of camera-clicking tourists, however, one is able to visit Naples today as a Grand Tourist might have done in the 18th century: alone. The city, one-time Arcady of Bourbon kings and queens, remains a glory.

Sex, gambling and drinking were all part of the Grand Tour experience. Florence, for all its Medicean splendour, was viewed as a sodomitical hotbed where the 'Italian vice' of homosexuality was, as it were, rampant. In 1641 the Old Etonian chemist and philosopher Robert Boyle claims to

have been harassed by bisexual friars in a Florence brothel ('gowned sodomites', he called them, with 'goatish heats'). Those in England might have thought Boyle had it coming. A Protestant milord travelling through papal lands during the Reformation was bound to get poked and pillaged, or at best swindled. To be loyal to England meant to stay at home.

Italy presented a civilisation in ruins. Typically the Grand Tourist visited the Colosseum, the Forum and, finally, Pompeii. Large parts of Pompeii had remained buried until 1748, when the Neapolitan authorities excavated what turned out to be shops, brothels, inns and stables. (Incredibly, only half of Pompeii has so far been uncovered.) English milord must have thrilled at the sight of excavators dredging carbonised bars of soap, rope-soled shoes, dates, olives, onions and phalluses carved into stonework (oddly resembling the ithyphallic symbols spray-gunned today on the walls of Naples).

What we know of everyday life in ancient times derives largely from Pompeii, so a visit to the ash-solidified town was essential if the Grand Tourist was to demonstrate a classical education acquired abroad. The ruts worn by wagon-wheels in the streets of Pompeii, its baths and buried villas brought Roman Italy thrillingly to life. Up Pompeii, down Pompeii: the town was a delight.

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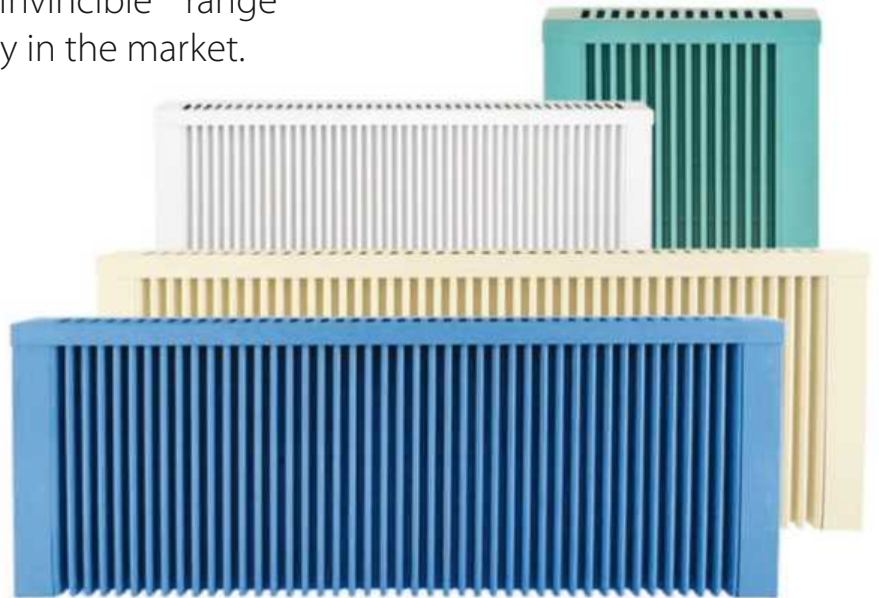
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LIFE

High life

Taki



Blind is an indie movie that has an original screenplay by John Buffalo Mailer and is directed by his older brother Michael Mailer. It stars Alec Baldwin and Demi Moore, and the cast includes yours truly. Personal feelings aside, and from all reports and rushes, this is going to be a really good one. Alec Baldwin is an old pro at this game, and his advice has been immeasurable and very much appreciated. I've never seen a more contented cast and there is a brilliant Polish cinematographer whose sensitivity shines through the drama.

Obviously, I will not give the game away, but it's a hell of a story: a writer who is planning to ask his wife for a divorce has a terrible car accident in which she's killed and he goes blind. In a parallel story, a big-time hedgeie, a master of the universe, is finally nailed and sent to jail. His wife, Demi, is given community service. While doing it, she meets the blind Alec and the inevitable happens. They fall in love. But the hedgeie still has some tricks up his sleeve, and his team of slick lawyers finds some irregularities during the discovery period of his conviction. The bad guy's out and you will never guess what happens next.

My own scene was shot last night at the Boom Boom Room, a place I know well but had never seen sober. I use the word 'uxorious' and spar with the writer Gay Talese about who invented sex, the Greeks or the Romans. (The Greeks, but the Romans included women.) Three takes was all it took. The director, Erich von Mailer, yelled cut, and that was it. I then shot another scene with the beautiful Cristina Cuomo, sister-in-law of the governor of New York, who asks me on camera how old I am. 'Younger than Socrates,' is the answer.

But I'm giving away all the secrets. I got a great review from the great Deborah Ross for my role in *Seduced & Abandoned*, the greatest movie ever made. This time I predict that the big shots will get an Oscar, as will the screenplay and Erich

von Mailer, the director. Last week, while on location in the Bronx, I felt that the place where we were shooting deserved an Oscar on account of its uniqueness. A copy of a renaissance Italian palazzo was built in the early part of the last century by a man called Andrew Freedman. It is located smack in the middle of the Grand Concourse, a couple of hundred feet from Yankee Stadium, and its purpose — now get this — was to provide for his well-to-do friends who had fallen on hard times.

Now we've all heard stories of eccentric millionaires leaving their loot to beloved dogs and cats, even a parrot once in a while, but no one ever thinks of giving a helping hand to fellow millionaires who might one day need the root of all envy. Freedman did — and put his money where his mouth was. He built this enormous palazzo and decreed in his will that friends who were born to privilege and to lotsa moolah but lost it should live there for free.

Soon after his death, guess what? Black Tuesday hit Wall Street and the palazzo filled up rather quickly. It must have been like a fraternity, with posh types comparing notes long into the night. That alone is worth a movie. Needless to say, Andrew Freedman's wishes were not followed to the letter. They never are, are they? The palazzo was turned over to the blind and to the poor, and who am I to argue with that, except if I were a Freedman. A will is a will, but governments ignore them and the moolah rarely goes where it was intended.

Still, it was fun to be shooting in a building built for rich people who have gone broke. In fact, I think it must be the only building in the world constructed for that purpose. The day I visited, Demi and Alec were shooting a most tender scene, in which she visits him and tells him her hubby's coming out and. . . . Talk about hard work. Precise work. I had brought some jodhpurs and riding boots for Erich von Mailer, but he wouldn't put them on. He did keep the whip, however. Alec and Demi were simply terrific, and oh so professional. Alec would break everyone up after the final take by either demanding another million dollars, or cracking a joke during the clench. As I said, acting is not for the faint at heart. It's a tough business. In fact, I'm taking back everything young Taki has ever written about the movies and the people in them. (And I know I'll regret it.)

Blind should wrap by Christmas — the crew is off to Europe next week to shoot on

location, which has put a crimp in my plans for some holiday partying as my friends will be away — but I will somehow manage on my own. I sent some pictures of Demi Moore and myself during the filming to London friends, who doctored them and sent them back to me. They're now in the hands of Epstein-Epstein & Goldfarb, my libel solicitors, and the joke's on them. See ya in court.

Low life

Jeremy Clarke



The car: a '06 rosso red Seat Ibiza 1.9 TDI Sport, bought three weeks ago from a man who had bought the car from the Stig's mum. If the Stig, with all his motoring experience, had carefully chosen the car for his dear old mum, it was an inspired choice. For an inexpensive, inoffensive-looking little two-door saloon, it is wonderfully quick. The route: from the north-western French port of Roscoff, in the socialist department of Finistère, down to Brignoles, the far-right, pied-noir capital of Provence; a 1,300-kilometre diagonal from the top left of the country to the bottom right. The in-car entertainment: ten CDs of smoky-voiced US southern-belle actress Elizabeth Ashley reading *Mad Pilgrimage of the Flesh*, John Lahr's biography of Tennessee Williams, her voice becoming hoarser with each successive CD. Travelling time, as computed by the satnav: 11 hours 53 minutes.

I drove it in one go, stopping only for diesel and double espressos. My chosen satnav voice: a sensible, optimistic young man from New Zealand who advised me at every plausible, and sometimes implausible, opportunity to 'grab our jandals and go and look for some steak and cheese pie'. The unmitigated contempt in his voice when warning of an imminent toll charge was a joy. The drugs: the aforementioned caffeine and Modafinil, 150mgs, which in combination kept me alert and interested throughout, with only mild hallucinations disturbing my peripheral vision after Avignon.

Observations. There isn't half the traffic

on French roads as there is on Britain's. It's like driving in the 1970s. Also, the French don't spend half as much money on their cars as we do, and they spend it patriotically. Eight out of every ten vehicles were compact or mid-range Renaults or Citroëns. But the French are faster and more aggressive drivers than we are. Their liberty takes your breath away. Drunk, probably, some of them. At the point in Elizabeth Ashley's narrative when Tennessee Williams was 12, and his mother, the monstrous Edwina, had bought a typewriter for ten dollars and touchingly presented it to him, I looked in the rear-view mirror to identify the maniac who was tailgating me for no earthly reason. It was a 70-year-old woman driving with one hand on the steering wheel and a cigarette clamped between her teeth.

Also, French motorway designers respect the driving abilities of their compatriots more than ours do, provocatively adding some very exciting cambers on the long downhill curves. Also, with no cat's eyes delineating the driving lanes, French motorway traffic is less orderly than ours, with a significant minority treating the road as a racetrack. Jockeying for position on exiting the *péages* is like the doors opening on the first day of the Selfridges Christmas sale. There are speed-enforcement cameras; but they are clearly advertised, allowing you

to commence braking gently to the requisite 130 kilometres an hour well in advance and rejoin the wacky racers the instant one passes the gantry. The tarmac is maintained to perfection. The single inoffensive pothole I encountered around about the time that Tennessee Williams lost his virginity, finally, aged 27, surprised me, and the image of it has remained in my memory. I could draw it for you now, a week later. In places, the flowering shrubs on the central reservations are as meticulously cultivated as the formal avenues in Regent's Park.

I passed two accident scenes. At the first a jeep was lying on its roof on the hard shoulder. The second looked more serious. It was about halfway. Tennessee Williams was 33. He had woken to find himself internationally famous after the storming success of *The Glass Menagerie*. 'The catastrophe of success,' was how he saw it afterwards. Two cars had collided, spun and come to rest in the slow lane. One was a charred shell. Bored-looking *pompier*s were standing around in the slow lane. In Britain we'd have been queuing for an hour to file past at a walking pace while investigators farted around with tape measures. Here, all that was required was a touch on the brake pedal as we drew level then it was foot hard to the floor again.

Tennessee Williams accommodatingly choked to death on the cap of his bottle of eyedrops ten miles from my destination. Seconal had suppressed his gag reflex, said the coroner. The dashboard clock said 5.30 in the morning. A crescent moon was lying submissively on her back with two bright planets in attendance, one above, one below. I stood on the terrace with a large scotch in my hand and watched the dawn break. The Seat had covered 800 miles without missing a beat on a tank and a quarter of diesel. All hail to the Stig's mum's Seat Ibiza TDI Sport.

Real life Melissa Kite



I got on a bus. Well, I wasn't to know, was I? I just saw a bus stop by the Science Museum and thought, 'I know, I'll get on a bus.' That's how long it has been since I've ventured on to the London roads.

Since driving became unfeasible due to congestion charging, I've been getting the Tube. I've thought about buses, but before credit card swiping the drivers would never

let me on. I suppose I shouldn't refuse to get an Oyster card because I don't want the state to know where I am. It's a foolish protest, but it's my protest.

However, the other day I was suddenly possessed by the urge to travel above ground. So when I saw a stop on Exhibition Road advertising a location in south London not far from my home, I placed myself by it for the purpose of catching the Clapham omnibus.

If I had known the epic journey I was about to embark upon I would have taken a flask of something hot and fortifying; a sleeping bag; a map and compass; trekking trousers; some matches to light a fire; and some kind of defensive weaponry for when I had to abandon ship and fight my way through the wilds of Lambeth in the pitch dark.

You've read *The Incredible Journey*? Well, what I went through on that bus — or rather those buses, because one bus kept leading to another bus — easily outdoes the two dogs and a cat who ventured 300 miles

*It is really, really important that you
do not get on a bus*

through the Canadian wilderness. Those pets had it easy.

Transport for London claims the journey time from Kensington to Balham by bus is 37 minutes. When I say it was more than three hours and 37 minutes I mean it. I can produce witnesses who will swear they telephoned me several times that day and I was continually on a bus from 2.30 p.m. until well past 6 p.m.

At one point, I sent a text message telling a friend: 'I am trying to remain hopeful. But I have to face facts. I think it unlikely I will ever get off this bus.'

At 3.30 p.m., having sat in solid traffic from Kensington to Pimlico, dozens of screaming schoolchildren got on and two of them sat on top of me, screeching Adele songs into my ear.

Just after 4.30 p.m., in solid traffic somewhere near Vauxhall, and feeling the urgent need to leave instructions on how my estate was to be divided in the event of my death, for I hadn't made a will, I phoned a close friend and begged her to tell me cheerful tales of good things happening elsewhere in the world so that this horror might not be my last memory.

At 4.43 p.m., a blonde, power-suited City girl came down from the top deck and shouted, 'Get off your phone, you idiot! You're annoying everybody!'

I looked around me to see only three depressed looking Pakistani ladies, all on their phones too. When scary woman got off the bus, I went upstairs to investigate and there was no one there.

At 5.15 p.m., somewhere near Clapham Junction, I wandered around the bus to stretch my legs but went too near the driver's

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cubicle and was barked at by an angry disembodied voice to 'Stand behind the line!'

'Where am I?' I thought. 'And what is it all about?'

I remember the bus running out of being a bus in a part of Clapham that was nowhere near the bit I had anticipated and then running down Northcote Road looking for another bus that would go to Balham.

I was running aimlessly when a bus crawled past me bearing the legend Telford Avenue, which sounded vaguely familiar, so I started to run faster and just made it.

Shortly after 6 p.m., when that bus ran out and declared itself terminated on Streatham High Road, I calculated it was a half hour walk to my flat. I was trudging through dark, wet streets when I remembered. . .

There followed a similar scene to the one in *Cast Away* when Tom Hanks, floating hopelessly adrift on his makeshift raft, all but collides with a passing cargo ship.

I wept tears of joy as the Volvo loomed over the horizon, sitting where I had parked it that morning on the borders of Streatham and Balham, so as to avoid the parking charges outside my flat. 'Vernon!' I cried.

My Airbnb customers were on the doorstep when I got home. The nice Australian couple watched me slam the car door and run towards them panting, my hair standing on end, clothes dishevelled.

Inside, after gulping some water, I gasped, 'Welcome to London. Can I just say that it is really, really important that you do not get on a bus.'

They nodded.

Long life

Alexander Chancellor



This is hardly the time of year for picnics on the lawn, but I have nevertheless had a week dominated by Glyndebourne. First I went to London to see David Hare's play *The Moderate Soprano*, about the creation of the Glyndebourne opera festival by John Christie in 1934; and then to a Glyndebourne production in Milton Keynes of Mozart's opera *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*.

John Christie was an extraordinary man. A rich country landowner, who served bravely in the first world war, he returned home to his house in Sussex to pursue his interest in music. He purchased a colossal organ, perhaps the biggest in England outside a cathedral. He put on little opera performances in the organ room. And then, at

the age of 48, having reputedly been celibate until then, he married a Canadian opera singer called Audrey Mildmay, the 'moderate soprano' of the play's title.

With her, and for her, he built a small, 300-seat theatre as an annexe to the organ room and opened an opera festival with *The Marriage of Figaro*. It was an instant success, achieving a standard of performance superior to anything else in England at the time; and this was largely due to the fact that he put in charge two distinguished émigrés from Nazi Germany, the conductor Fritz Busch and the opera director Carl Ebert.

To them he added as general manager the Austrian émigré Rudolf Bing, who after the second world war helped Christie launch the Edinburgh Festival by bringing Glyndebourne opera to the city. Bing became a British citizen and was knighted for his service,

Glyndebourne may be quintessentially English but it was the creation of Germanic immigrants

but soon moved on — to Christie's dismay — to run the Metropolitan Opera House in New York. Hare in his play makes much of the fact that Glyndebourne, so widely regarded as a quintessentially English institution, was in fact the creation of Germanic immigrants.

But, of course, it could never have existed without John Christie, who had the idea and the money and energy to make it happen. His portrayal in Hare's play (brilliant though Roger Allam's performance is) has caused some controversy, because some who knew him think it doesn't sufficiently reflect his wit and charm. I wouldn't know about that, though I did once meet him. Christie was for several years a science master at Eton, and such was his affection for the school that every year he would invite a group of Eton schoolboys to attend an opera with him in his box. In 1957 I was one of this group, and I remember him as a very amiable and hospitable old boy in a dinner jacket.

Evening dress was something that Christie insisted upon, because he thought it incumbent upon audiences to dress formally out of respect for the artists who had worked so hard. If the artists had made such an effort, the audience should make one too. Hare makes much of this, and also of the fact that Christie's original idea was to put on Wagner, not Mozart, in his little theatre. He was a great Wagner fan, a regular visitor to Bayreuth, and he initially proposed that the festival should open with *Parsifal*, suggesting that it could be done with nothing more than a string quartet and his great organ booming away through an open door from the room adjoining the theatre. Busch and Ebert told him that this was ridiculous and persuaded him to go for Mozart instead.

And so it turned out that Glyndebourne built its reputation on its performances of Mozart, and it was many years after Christie's death in 1962 that it finally put on a Wagner opera, *Tristan und Isolde*. I think it may well have been *Die Entführung* that I saw there on my first visit in 1957. I'm not quite sure whether it was then or later; it might have been Rossini's *Le comte Ory*. For I saw both these operas at Glyndebourne in those (for me) early years, and both have remained favourites with me ever since. And to see *Die Entführung* again after all these years, and in the splendid theatre of Milton Keynes, a glory of this much derided city, was an enormous pleasure. It was a wonderful production, confirming that the standards aspired to by John Christie in the 1930s have been maintained if not surpassed.

The performance I saw took place the day after the hideous Isis massacre in Paris. The plot of the opera concerns the efforts of a Spanish nobleman to rescue his beloved from a harem in Turkey where she has been made captive by a Muslim pasha who is in love with her. Their attempted escape is thwarted, and the Spaniard turns out to be the son of the pasha's most hated enemy. Nevertheless, forswearing any thoughts of revenge, the pasha recognises their love for each other and nobly lets them go free. An admirable Muslim indeed.

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Wild life

Aidan Hartley

*Laikipia*

Night falls like a fire curtain at seven and I go to bed not long afterwards, serenaded by bullfrogs after rain. Having risen long before dawn, ranchers tend to sleep early, following a thin gruel of a supper. In upcountry Kenya it used to be that pyjamas and dressing-gowns were permissible for even quite posh dinners. Once in a blue moon, one might keep a farmer awake with good whisky or rugby to watch. Sometimes, once an evening gets going, by night's end there's reeling and the light bulbs are being used for target practice. Not more than once or twice in a year, mind you, or this can crowd out a man.

Not an hour after I've shut my eyes I wake again. From below my window come vaguely Jurassic, subsonic rumbles. I stumble outside, to find the night aska-

ri Akope flashing his torch around. In the inky black, a tree is pushed over. I send up a flare, which illuminates a dozen elephant consuming my herbaceous borders. They canter off, demolishing a wide section of dry-stone wall.

Back in the house, the dogs are silent. The family are all away, at school or in other continents for work. I am getting to that point where I have started holding quite complex conversations with the dogs. 'Cowards,' I say now and get back into bed.

I doze off to the insect wall of sound. With a start I wake again and time has

In upcountry Kenya it used to be that pyjamas and dressing-gowns were permissible for even quite posh dinners

passed. I do not know what disturbed me but the insects have suddenly gone quiet. I wonder what makes them stop, what they are waiting for. Out here, many miles from the nearest road, there is no noise at all, only the rush of blood in my ears, and that faint, unceasing rumble of the earth turning that you hear in the bush.

I get up, dress in yesterday's smoky clothes. Akope has vanished, probably sleeping on a sun lounger or in a wheelbarrow. I drive over to the cattle boma.



The constellations are so clear and thick with light that I might climb into them. At the boma I am delighted to find the askari Leshomo and the stockman Apurra awake by the campfire. Somebody to talk to in the lonely night! We chat quietly about the cows, which are lying down and chewing the cud. Leshomo has set his bed up right in among the cattle.

A lion grunts in the valley. Apurra flashes his torch. Out across the plains, from miles away in Samburu or Pokot country, a light flashes in response. This sets off a sequence of other flashes from across the sparsely scattered bomas up to the horizon. It's like a busy shipping lane, but silent. The cattlemen from all tribes are awake tonight in every camp, all the way to Ethiopia.

In our western culture we tend to take our sleep in one go, for eight hours if we can in our private places, and to remain awake for the rest of the day. Among the pastoralists and nomads, it's different. People seem to nap several times in a full day, and they might be up at all hours of the night in camp, dozing by the fire and in turns chatting, guarding, singing, milking.

Sometimes we've heard gunfire in the distance — or nearby — and detonations on gusts of wind, the sounds of fighting swishing from one end of the valley to the other. But in the past two weeks it has rained and you can almost hear the grass growing. There is no trouble.

On the road there is an aardvark and two jackals, an African hare. Back at the house, the dogs are pleased to see me, so I take them outside for a wander and a pee, keeping a close eye on them in case of leopard. At last, it's time to sleep. Instead I lie there worrying, about family members, unpaid bills, and the scar on my hand throbs. A zebra brays from the valley. At 4.30 a.m. sharp, I listen to the piston-engine aircraft that flies north at exactly this time every morning to some army base or oil-exploration camp in the desert.

I must have slept, it seems, but for only a few minutes — and I come to again hearing the pre-dawn bustards taking to the air, flying towards the very first colour in the sky. The zebra are going bonkers. Then the VHF radio crackles into life with Apurra summoning all hands to the crush for dipping day and I am up. The dogs tear out of the house looking for a klipspringer to chase or a tortoise to intimidate. The askari Akope has miraculously reappeared. I do not think I got much sleep at all!

DON'T MISS THE NEXT ISSUE OF

SPECTATOR
LIFE

FEATURING

Jess Phillips: My new hero by Julie Burchill
Was CND a KGB front? by Willard Foxton
Labour's Ivy League rest home by James Kirchick
+ Julia Hartley-Brewer says she's no Katie Hopkins

FREE WITH THE SPECTATOR
5 DECEMBER



Bravissimo! The Italians have won gold yet again at the European Champions Cup. The event was launched in 2002, and since then Italy has won all but twice. England has never won, but as the host nation this year we got to field two teams, and they came third and fifth — not quite so *magnifico* perhaps, but still our best result yet. I was, as usual, glued to BBO, and saw some thrilling bridge. Almost every N-S pair managed to reach 7♠ on this deal — not all made it, but Dennis Bilde, for Italy, and David Bakshshi, for England, showed perfect technique:

Dealer North

♠ J 4 2
♥ A Q 10 8 4
♦ A 3
♣ A K 8

♠ 9 5 3
♥ 7 6 3
♦ J 2
♣ J 10 6 4 2

♠ 8
♥ K J 9 2
♦ Q 8 7 5
♣ Q 9 7 3

♠ A K Q 10 7 6
♥ 5
♦ K 10 9 6 4
♣ 5

West	North	East	South
	1♥	Pass	2♠
pass	2NT	pass	3♦
pass	3♠	pass	4♣
pass	4♦	pass	4NT
pass	5♦	pass	6♣
pass	7♠	all pass	

Against Bilde, West led the ♠3. Bilde won with the ♠Q, cashed the ♠A, led a heart to the ace and ruffed a heart. He continued with a diamond to the ace and ruffed another heart low, then played ♦K and ruffed a diamond with the ♠J. A third heart ruff established the ♥Q and he now drew the missing trump, throwing dummy's club loser, and claimed the last three tricks with the ♠AK and ♥Q. A perfect line — working whenever diamonds are 3–3, or hearts 4–3 or ♥Kx. Note that had he touched clubs earlier he'd have had no entry to the ♥Q.

Against Bakhshi, West led a club, which meant he had to go for a 3-3 diamond break, a heart finesse, or a squeeze against East. He won the club, played a trump to the ♠10 and cashed the Q♠. Then he played ♦AK, and ruffed a diamond with the ♠J. Next came the ♣K, a club ruff, and three more trumps. He was down to ♥5♦10 opposite ♥AQ. East was down to ♥Q♦Q. Unerringly, Bakhshi played a heart to the ♥A, dropping East's ♥K.

It's already started — the festive flood of shoddy champagne — on BOGOF deals in the supermarkets. Well, BOGOF indeed. Such fizz might bear the magical name of champagne, but all too often these wines will have been made from the second or even third pressing of inferior fruit from the less good plots, and aged for the bare legal minimum of 15 months rather than the more usual four or five years.

If I can't have or can't afford Pol or Bol or something similar, then I'd far rather stick to the 2013 Blanquette de Limoux, 'Saint-Hilaire', Aimery (1), a wonderful sparkler made by the champagne method in the Languedoc and offered here by the wise old Wine Company. They were making sparkling wine there a full century before they worked out how to do it in Champagne, and this blend of Blanquette (aka Mauzac), Chardonnay and Chenin Blanc is spot-on. It's dry with fine acidity and, having aged on its lees, has plenty of weighty white peach and pear fruit with a nice touch of ripeness. It's perfect for the Boxing Day party on its own or as part of a reviving Buck's Fizz or Black Velvet. £11 down from £12.99.

The 2014 Gavi di Gavi, Manfredi (2), is a charming white made from 100 per cent

Cortese in the south-east of Piedmont in northern Italy. It's fresh, fruity and crisp with ample body and teasing hints of lemon and herbs. Enjoy with the Christmas smoked eel, salmon or oysters. £10.25 down from £11.49.

Our two reds are ideal for a canny Christmas. The 2013 Pic St-Loup 'Sélection' Seigneur de Lauret (3) from the Languedoc is a robust blend of 80 per cent Syrah and 20 per cent Grenache brimming with concentrated ripe red and black fruit, liquorice and spice. There is some tannin but you won't notice this with grub, and I reckon it would be a great partner to the roast turkey or baked ham. £9.75 down from £10.99.

The 2013 Malbec, Piedra Negra (4), is a perfect example of Mendoza Malbec produced by François Lurton, scion of the famed family of Bordelais vignerons. I've interviewed François in Argentina and remember him telling me how bowled over he was when he realised what vibrant colour and great depth of flavour he could achieve with Malbec there. Violet-scented and soft, smooth and intense on the palate, it's supremely drinkable and ideal with a Christmas rib of beef or even Boxing Day cold roast beef sandwiches. £10.50 down from £12.49.

There's a sample case with three of each bottle and delivery, as ever, is free.

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Chess

Grand Larsen-y

Raymond Keene

It is said that more books have been written about chess than about any other game, sport or pastime. I can well believe it. When the Chess and Bridge (shop.chess.co.uk) catalogue dropped through my letterbox last week, I counted 360 book titles, and I know that is just the tip of the iceberg.

One book that caught my eye in the catalogue was the unlikely entry *Best Larsen's Bent Games of Chess*. I know that Bent Larsen, a supergrandmaster who in his time defeated Botvinnik, Smyslov, Tal, Petrosian, Spassky, Fischer and Karpov, sometimes resorted to weird openings, but the catalogue typo seemed to be taking things a little far.

The game below is based on one from a new book on Larsen, *Larsen Move by Move* by Cyrus Lakdawala (Everyman Chess).

Botvinnik-Larsen: Leiden 1970; Dutch Defence

1 c4 f5 2 d4 Nf6 3 g3 e6 4 Bg2 Bb4+ 5 Nd2 0-0 6 Ngf3 a5 7 0-0 b6 8 Ne5 Ra7 Larsen took an almost malicious delight in confusing booked-up opponents by injecting the position with original problems for both sides to solve. **9 Nd3 Bb7 10 Nf3 Be7 11 b3 Ne4 12 Bb2 Bf6 13 a3 c5 14 e3 Nc6 15 Nfe5 cxd4 16 exd4 Nxe5 17 dxe5 Be7 18 a4** A rare strategic misjudgment from the maestro. Larsen's oddness of play had a mysteriously confusing effect on even experienced opponents. Botvinnik wants to fix b6 as a target but this is misguided. **18 ... Qc7 19 Qc2 Bc6 20 f3 Nc5 21 Nf4 Bg5 22 Ne2 Be3+ 23 Kh1 f4** (see diagram 1) It is disorienting to witness Botvinnik getting outplayed strategically. White's game continues to subtly deteriorate. **24 Nd4** A mistake. Botvinnik seriously underestimates the danger to his king. His plan is too simple and instead, 24 Rad1 was necessary, intending 24 ... fxc3 (24 ... Raa8 is correct) 25 Qc3! Bg5 26 hxc3, when White's pieces suddenly unravel with advantage. **24 ... fxc3 25 Nxc6 dxc6 26 hxc3 Qf7 27 Bh3 Rd8 28 Bc3 Rad7 29 Ra2 Rd3** This is good but 29 ... Rd1 was even stronger. **30 b4 axb4 31 Bxb4 Qh5 32 Qh2 Qxe5 33 f4 Qe4+ 34 Qg2 Qxd4 35 Bxc5 Bxc5** Black needs his

Diagram 1

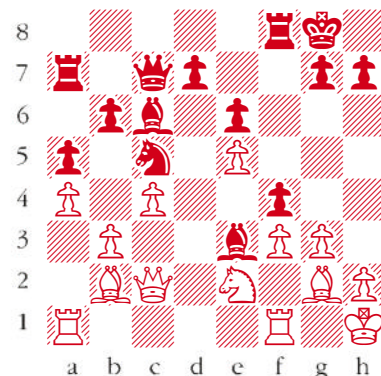
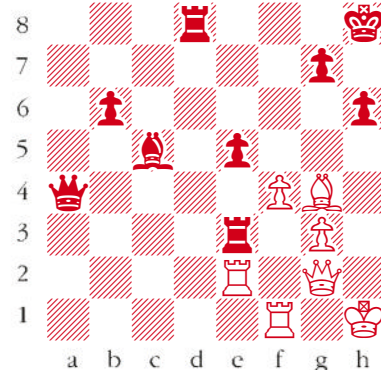


Diagram 2

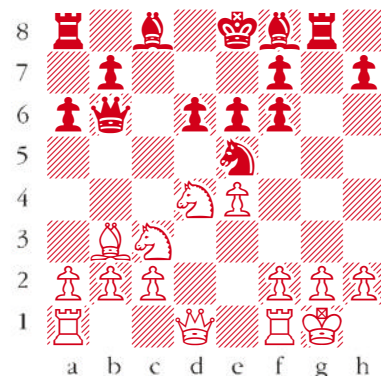


e-pawn to undermine f4. Hence 35 ... Qxc5 36 Bxe6+ Kh8 would be inferior. **36 Qxc6 Re3 37 Raf2 Kh8 38 Qg2 h6 39 Bg4 Qxa4 40 Re2 e5** (see diagram 2) Now White's king becomes hopelessly exposed. **41 Ra2 Qc4 42 Rc2 Qb4 43 Bf5 exf4 44 gxf4 Re1 45 Re2 Rxf1+ 46 Qxf1 Rf8 47 Be4 Qd4 48 Kg2 Qf6** Forcing the pawn to f5 weakens the dark squares around the white king further. If the f-pawn goes, even the pure opposite-coloured bishop endgame won't save White. **49 f5 Qg5+ 50 Kh1 Qh4+ 51 Kg2 Rd8 52 Bc2 Rd4** White resigns 53 Re8+ Kh7 54 f6+ g6 55 Bxg6+ Kxg6 56 Qb1+ Kxf6 57 Qf1+ Kg7 and Black wins.

PUZZLE NO. 388

Black to play. This is from Sursock-Larsen, Siegen 1970. How can Black win material? Answers to me at The Spectator by Tuesday 24 November or via email to victoria@spectator.co.uk or by fax on 020 7681 3773. The winner will be the first correct answer out of a hat, and each week there is a prize of £20. Please include a postal address and allow six weeks for prize delivery.

Last week's solution 1 Qxh7+
Last week's winner William Sibree,
Chart Sutton, Kent



Competition

Bad sex award

Lucy Vickery

In Competition No. 2924 you were invited to submit a 'love scene' from a novel that dampens rather than boosts the reader's libido. It was a cracking entry, so I'll keep it brief to make space for as many winners as possible. Dishonourable mentions go to Peter Goulding, Sergio Michael Petro, Margaret Timbrell and Ann Drysdale. The winners take £25 each. George Simmers nabs the bonus fiver.

Their gazes met longingly above their mugs of Freetrade herbal tea. Shyly, he offered a proforma document affirming consent to sexual intercourse. She signed it with an eager flourish. Quickly, they both undressed, taking care not to make any remarks that might be taken as objectifying the other's body. They embraced.

'It's wonderful to be like this,' he said. 'Just a man and a woman, doing this most natural of things,' but quickly added, 'which is not, of course, to disparage those who make alternative sexual choices.'

Their hands explored each other's bodies as eagerly as their minds had earlier explored alternatives to fracking. He reached for an ethically sourced condom.

They made love happily in a position that did not imply male dominance, but he sensed that she was not yet quite ready. He whispered in her ear: 'Jeremy Corbyn.'

'Yes!' she screamed. 'Yes! Yes! Yes!'

George Simmers

Smedley and Morag fell upon one another, limbs writhing in an impersonation of an octopus fixated exclusively on its own anatomy, their tongues attempting to grapple in limbless approximation of a wrestling bout. Wanting not merely to possess one another but actually to have been one another since Whitsun, each snorted hungrily after the whiff of the other; Morag relishing the intoxicant waft of sodden corduroy, Smedley relishing the aroma of boiling piccalilli. Their clothes literally melted, their naked selves emerging, jerking and spitting like sausage dogs copulating atop an electric fence. Smedley felt a Balkan upheaval in his groin, hoped Morag felt it also, knew she did from the way her dilating pupils retreated towards ecstasy. He wanted to cram her to overflowing with his future children, she lodged no Health and Safety restrictions. Thrashing their way to completion with stentorian guffaws, they commingled and collapsed, spent as drachma.

Adrian Fry

'If you liked that,' Horace whispered, 'you'll love what's coming next.'

Deirdre doubted that anything could stir her to greater heights of arousal than Joe Dolce's 'Shaddap You Face' already had, but the moment that she heard the opening bars of the *Steptoe and Son* theme she doubted no more. 'Ecstasy,' she purred.

'My God,' Horace breathed as he ran his hand up her varicosed shin, 'you're wearing surgical support stockings.'

'Happy 93rd birthday, darling,' Deirdre purred,

tonguing his ear and dislodging a lump of wax that he'd had been trying to shift for days.

'Thanks, babe. Let me fetch you a bin.'

'No need,' Deirdre said with a coquettish smile. 'I've already swallowed it.' She pulled a bag of wigs and false moustaches from underneath the bed and started to sort through the contents. 'Now which of the Chuckle Brothers do you want me to be tonight?' she asked.

Rob Stuart

'I can feel your pimples rising,' she said, thinking of the hot, hot wind that morning, and the way he had held her fiercely against the wall of the latrine. Now his fingers began their foxtrot over the yellow sheets. Somewhere in those trews, an old badger was stirring, somewhere its musk was beginning to fill the air. Brock jock cock. She must hang on for him, for his polecat soul. Her bowels began to throb, urgently, and she thought of his Bofors gun, the way it was cranking itself into position, the way it would soon be firing those deliquescent, gelatinous shells that made her simper like a Stroganoff cocktail. Oh mercy. He heaved himself across her with all the power at his disposal. She began to dribble with delight. 'Tell me again,' he roared, as he jemmied her polished cleft with wrinkled fingers, 'What's your tartan?'
Bill Greenwell

As Scott climbed on top of Amanda, he mused out loud about the use of the word 'conjugate' both to refer to the sexual act and to the grammatical practice of adapting verbs to the proper tense and person. Amanda, deeply aroused, winked at Scott through the candlelight and said, 'Oh Scott! That's brilliant! But kindly dispense with the passive voice! Give me active, transitive verbs!'

Scott did as she commanded, and as his improper noun found its way inside Amanda's objective predicate, he asked her, shyly and subjunctively, how she felt about role playing involving intentional solecism?

'I is all for it,' she answered, and Scott never felt as dirty in his life.

Roger Slater

As Seymour fussed with the clasp of her flannel brassière, Agnes wondered aloud at the pungent aroma that suddenly filled the room. Seymour touched his dry lips to a small constellation of skin tags on Agnes's shoulder before whispering, 'I've made broccoli in the microwave.'

Agnes scurried off to the bathroom and returned with small pieces of tissue paper dangling from her nostrils. With a sly and lascivious grin, she said, 'Now, where were we?'

'Hold that thought!' Seymour answered, and scurried from the bedroom to the kitchen where he sprinkled salt and a pad of butter on top of the newly cooked broccoli. He was back in an instant, a crooked smile on his face. Twirling the ends of his handlebar moustache, he explained: 'It's for after.'

Robert Schechter

NO. 2927: A CHRISTMAS CAROL

You are invited to submit a Christmas carol as it might have been written by a well-known writer. Please email entries of up to 16 lines to lucy@spectator.co.uk by mid-day on 30 November *Please note the earlier-than-usual deadline, which is because of our Christmas production schedule.*

Crossword

2238:

Old issues

by *Dumpynose*

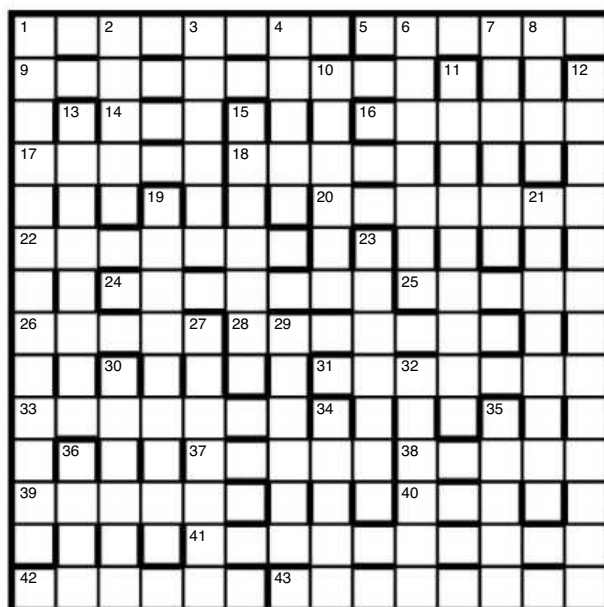
The title suggests a pair of unclued lights which identify the common feature of the others. Solvers must shade the pair. Elsewhere, ignore an apostrophe.

Across

- 5 Protozoon seen wriggling aboard steamboat (6)
- 9 Water envelops very soft body part (10, two words)
- 14 One lacking time and place for study (3)
- 16 Piebald from Golden State I start to canter on (6)
- 17 Refuse in Derry collected by Bonfire night (5)
- 18 To take clothes off is wrong without hot temperature (5)
- 22 Tepid daughter is not after libertine (7)
- 25 Street of aged colonnades (5)
- 26 No longer restrain one relapsing lunatic (5)
- 28 Languages Marconi deployed (7)
- 31 Ruin behind village school (7)
- 33 So-called mimic accepted by drama school finally (7)
- 38 Birds circling Channel island love nesting (5)
- 39 Exclusive party a pair of lemons gatecrash (6)
- 40 Ceramicist's china (3)
- 41 Fez trainee lost? It should be in the car (10)
- 6 Lakes stocked with silver fish (7)
- 7 Nine nursed by priest take nostrum (6)
- 10 Pass by famous frog (prince not king) (6)
- 11 Twice I left Mike jittery about old working system (9)
- 12 Daring grooms presenting cleaning tools (13)
- 13 Star keeps humming tune till now (8)
- 19 Blessed ladies die worshipped (9)
- 21 Sons row off progressing spectacularly (8)
- 23 Trial has speeding European imprisoned (7)
- 27 Servant unknown to whip animal (7, two words)
- 29 Painting with loaf and fruit (6)
- 30 Glass of very good whisky swallowed (6)
- 32 A criminal snubbed rakish policeman (6)
- 34 Fruit machine very small saint shuns (5)
- 35 Cricket enthralled English composer (5)
- 36 Noble look (4)

Down

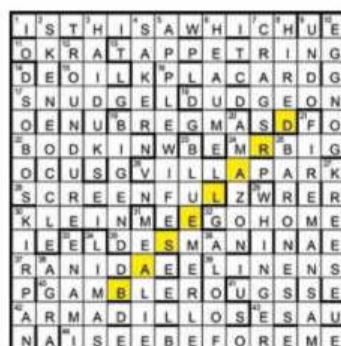
- 1 Prolixity tainted usurer's slogan (13)
- 2 A sister stores it for aged relative (5)
- 3 Vatican notices rude gestures (6, hyphenated)
- 4 Lady's smock has light red colour (5)



A first prize of £30 for the first correct solution opened on 1 December. There are two runners-up prizes of £20. (UK solvers can choose to receive the latest edition of the Chambers Dictionary instead of cash — ring the word 'Dictionary'.) Entries to: Crossword 2238, The Spectator, 22 Old Queen Street, London SW1H 9HP. Please allow six weeks for prize delivery.

Name

Address



SOLUTION TO 2235: VILE STUFF

The quotation was 'IS THIS A [DAGGER] WHICH I SEE BEFORE ME' (1/44) (*Macbeth*). 18, 22, 2, 27, 29 and 30D are daggers. BASELARD (diagonally from the 12th row) was to be shaded. VILE STUFF suggests BASE LARD.

First prize Michael Sargisson, Norwich

Runners-up Brian Willis, Bicton, Australia; Deborah Davis, Sholing, Southampton

Status Anxiety

Are we looking at the end of liberal democracy?

Toby Young

As a graduate student in the Harvard Department of Government in the late 1980s, I became slightly jaded about the number of visiting academics who warned about the imminent demise of the West. The thrust of their arguments was nearly always the same. The secular liberal values we cherish, such as the separation of church and state and freedom of speech, won't survive in the face of growing religious animosity unless they're rooted in something more intellectually and spiritually compelling than capitalist individualism. They were talking about Islamic fundamentalism, obviously, though sometimes they threw in Christian fundamentalism to seem even-handed.

These political scientists were, without exception, left of centre and their critique of classical liberalism was usually accompanied by a call for some version of socialism or communitarianism. I was a member of a small band of conservatives in the department, and after the visitors' words had been warmly received by everyone else, one of us would put up a hand and ask if they'd name the date at which liberal democracy would expire. Ten years? Fifteen years? Fifty? If they were foolish enough to suggest a date, the follow-up was instantaneous: 'Care to make a wager?'

There have been many occasions since then when I've regretted that



Enlightenment values are thin gruel next to the heady cocktail of anti-western ideology and a brutally literal interpretation of the Quran

callow response, with the terrorist attack in Paris being the latest example. The West has rarely seemed more weak or divided than in the past few days, with the muted reaction of President Obama, the continuing refusal of Jeremy Corbyn to countenance airstrikes against Syria and the usual platitudes from all sides about how the Islamic State isn't genuinely Islamic, which isn't a view shared by all of the world's Muslims. In a poll conducted in Saudi Arabia last year, 92 per cent of respondents believed 'IS conforms to the values of Islam and Islamic law'.

Britain's liberal intelligentsia have been particularly bereft of ideas. Their continuing opposition to extending the investigatory powers of our security services, as well as their commitment to open borders, seem destined to join proportional representation on the dust heap of lost causes.

It isn't just the inadequacy of the West's response that suggests the horse is 'weak', to use Osama bin Laden's metaphor. It's the fact that the terrorists were, for the most part, French and Belgian nationals. The universal values of the enlightenment have proved to be pretty thin gruel next to the heady cocktail of anti-western ideology and a brutally literal interpretation of the Quran. They're not outliers, either. According to a recent ICM poll, 16 per cent of French citizens have a positive view of Isis, with the figure rising to 27 per cent for 18- to 24-year-olds. One crumb of comfort is that the numbers in the UK are lower. The same poll revealed that 7 per cent of British citizens look favourably on Isis — still an astonishingly high figure — falling to 4 per cent of 18- to 24-year-olds.

Patrick Marnham wrote last month in *The Spectator* about a growing band

of French intellectuals known as *les nouveaux réactionnaires*. They blame multiculturalism, moral relativism and post-colonial guilt for the decline of the values that used to define France, such as freedom of expression, a sense of universal brotherhood and *égalité*. Their solution, apart from replacing François Hollande with Marine Le Pen in 2017, is to call a halt to Muslim immigration and do whatever it takes to get France's existing Muslim population (7.5 per cent of the total) to 'integrate', starting with the vigorous enforcement of the niqab ban introduced by Sarkozy five years ago.

That seems fairly draconian and I'm left wondering what authority, apart from a dying European tradition, they can appeal to in the hope of winning over their disaffected Muslim citizens, as opposed to alienating them even further. The enlightenment project of basing liberal values on reason and empiricism has long been discredited, and we've probably left it too late to reverse the decline of Christianity. The West is crying out for a leader who can solve this conundrum and in the absence of one emerging, the future described by the French novelist Michel Houellebecq seems ever more likely. In his last novel, the aptly named *Submission*, France becomes an Islamic republic in 2022, with the Muslim Brotherhood and the Socialist Party uniting behind a French Tunisian President to keep out the Front National. Judging from the British left's accommodations with Islamism, that doesn't seem too far-fetched. If this particular Cassandra offered me a wager, I wouldn't take it.

Toby Young is associate editor of The Spectator.

MICHAEL HEATH



The Wiki Man

Does HS2 pass the Butterfield test?

Rory Sutherland

Despite my opposition to High Speed 2, I am quite a big fan of HS1, the line which runs from St Pancras to Ebbsfleet, Ashford and on to other towns in north and east Kent. I also think HS3 — a proposed line linking the cities of t'Northern Powerhouse — is a good idea.

Why the inconsistency? Well, I believe HS1 and HS3 are significant innovations whereas HS2, though it costs far more and covers a much greater distance, is not. In fact I would argue, counterintuitively, that HS2's greater length is precisely what makes high-speed rail less necessary: the cost of the longer journey means that most people do not make it very often.

Two years ago, Stewart Butterfield, a Silicon Valley innovator and one of the co-founders of both Flickr and Slack, made the following comment in an email to his colleagues: 'The best — maybe the only? — real, direct measure of "innovation" is change in human behaviour. In fact, it is useful to take this way of thinking as definitional: innovation is the sum of change across the whole system,



'No small innovation ever caused a large shift in how people spend their time and no large one has ever failed to do so'

not a thing which causes a change in how people behave. No small innovation ever caused a large shift in how people spend their time and no large one has ever failed to do so.'

I think he is right. The best metrics for technology are not engineering metrics — speed, journey time, processor speed or whatever. They are human metrics — specifically the question 'Will this change what people do?' It is easy to produce innovations that look significant on paper but have little effect on human action.

Concorde was a case in point: there were only ever 2,000 David Frosts in the world who crossed the Atlantic so frequently that a three-hour time-saving mattered to them. The humble low-cost airline, however, pricing tickets according to demand, has changed the behaviour of millions. (Another unsung success of recent years is the introduction of cheap advance first-class rail tickets, by far the fastest-growing type of fare. These trebled my use of trains.)

Butterfield's Law explains why HS1 and HS3 might be better than HS2: they change behaviour more. To understand why, you need to acknowledge that human behaviour cannot be modelled using what physicists call 'mean field theory'. If you assume that human beings are interchangeable atoms, you can simply choose a metric such as 'minutes saved per passenger journey' and use that to define

success. But if you want to change behaviour, you have to acknowledge that people aren't atoms. There is a big difference between saving ten people 30 minutes 400 times a year and saving 200 people 30 minutes 20 times a year.

Before HS1, commuting between east Kent and London took over 90 minutes each way — the same as travelling from Bristol. It now takes 56 minutes. A Canterbury commuter now has an extra 250 hours at home each year: this is a life-changing difference, which makes seeking work in London feasible. Similarly, HS3 would make it possible to work in Manchester while your spouse worked in Newcastle. A couple might save 400 hours a year.

By contrast, normal people don't travel between London and Manchester more than 20 times a year (if you are commuting from Manchester to London, you don't need a train, you need an estate agent). The prospect of saving 30 minutes twice a month is not a game-changer.

A transport link 'agglomerating' the cities of the north is a much better idea. If nothing else, it would mean that the mutual loathing of Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool and Newcastle might at least be informed by actual experience.

Rory Sutherland is vice-chairman of Ogilvy Group UK.

DEAR MARY YOUR PROBLEMS SOLVED



Q. I work in the London art market. Often, when I run into a fellow dealer and ask how they are in a friendly way, I get a reply along the lines of 'It's been totally mad. I've just come back from New York and I'm about to go to Hong Kong, then it's Dubai the week after that...' Clearly these people imagine that rushing around the world suggests that they are incredibly successful, when paradoxically all this exertion shows that unfortunately the opposite is the case. I usually say 'Gosh you must be busy!' but

am beginning to feel that it would be kinder not to pretend to buy into their self-delusion. What would you recommend, Mary? — Name and address withheld

A. The correct response is 'Oh, poor you.' Pronounce these words while wearing a caring expression. Then stay silent as they expand on why the rollercoaster ride has been necessary. They will soon tire of the self-justification and begin to reply 'Really well!' when you next pose your polite question.

Q. As the Christmas party season approaches, I am unnerved by the thought of how many people I am going to run into who greet me and whose names I have either forgotten or never knew. The problem is that I make regular television appearances and so people sometimes think

they know me when we have not actually met. My main concern is not to upset the people I have actually met, sometimes on many occasions over a long career. How should I tackle this as people may think I have become too grand and self-important to remember them, when the problem is brain overload? — Name and address withheld

A. As soon as they greet you, smile warmly as you bring out a small notepad and pen and say: 'Don't say another word until you've given me your number. I need to update my address book.' Add 'Spell your name clearly so my secretary gets it right.' In this way you can stare at the data elicited before any further conversational interchange and thereby avoid committing any real or imaginary slights.

Q. Re: free directory inquiries (24 October): it is simpler to dial 0800 118 3733. You have to listen to a sponsor's short 'commercial' but thereafter the procedure is quick and straightforward. — R.L.C., Redhill, Surrey

A. Thank you for passing on this nugget, which will be of use to those who cannot go online to look up numbers. The service can be activated on 'alphabet' dialling pads by ringing 0800 118FREE. It is well worth a caller's while to listen to the advertising message, which takes less than a minute. It is no nuisance when you consider the outrageous alternative of ringing 118118, which costs £2.75 per call plus £2.99 per minute, with a minimum 60-second call and 'your service's connection charge' on top.

Drink

Slake a sleeping tiger

Bruce Anderson



We were talking about the West of Ireland and agreed that there were few greater gastronomic pleasures than a slowly and lovingly poured pint of Guinness accompanied by a generous helping of oysters, in a village restaurant overlooking the sea where peace comes dropping slow: where exertion is left to the bee-loud glade and anyone with any get up and go, got up and went several decades ago. 'Beware too much glib romanticism,' said one of our number. 'You might be talking about some charming little place in Kerry, which could turn out to be a significant recruiting station for the IRA, sending plenty of young men with get up and go to go out and kill. Forget Innisfree: what about "As though to die by gunshot were/ the best play under the sun."'

Ireland not only produces more Guinness than it can consume; the same applies to history. That said, there was a wary optimism among the indomitable Irishry around the table. Wiser and more cautious than in the days of the Celtic Tiger, they were

When not sodomising the children, the Irish clergy were educating them with methods as effective as they were brutal

also uneasy because Sinn Féin is lying second in the opinion polls; that tiger still has claws. Even so, there was general agreement that the Irish economy is recovering. Ireland has two advantages. First, its Catholicism has a strong puritanical strain and when the markets imploded, a lot of the bog-trotters thought that their country was getting its just deserts. 'We were never meant to have it that good; we were bound to be made to pay for our pleasures.' This has helped the current Taoiseach, Enda Kenny — perhaps the most impressive PM Ireland has had — to sustain an austerity programme far tougher than in the UK: a tiger to a pussycat.

Second, although the Irish clergy are now notorious for educational atrocities, there were compensations. When they were not sodomising the children, they were educating them, with methods that were as effective as they were brutal. I know one girl who claims that she received 14 strokes of a leather strap across her hands from the nuns in one single day. There was no point in complaining to her parents. They would merely have told her that she must be a very wicked girl to have annoyed the Holy Sisters that much. So there was no

alternative. She had to learn Latin, French and maths or she would have had no hands left. Although this is not quite what Isaiah Berlin had in mind when he warned us that the great goods cannot always live together, an education system steeped in cruelty has ensured that the Irish population is among the best educated in the world. That plus low corporate taxes and relaxing hospitality equals inward investment.

Talk of hospitality brought back memories of a trip to Dublin 30-odd years ago. Everything that could go wrong had gone wrong. The plane was hours late and by the time I reached my hotel, dinner time had got up and left. But I felt myself being scrutinised by a monkey-faced waiter the size of an undernourished jockey. 'Wid ye be wantin' som'tin to eat, sorr?' I would. 'Wha-at about roast beef sandwiches?' We agreed on thickly cut, as rare as possible, brown bread and a pot of mustard. But I rapidly thought better of the mustard. 'And som'tin to drink, sorr?' 'Definitely.' 'A bottle of red wine?' 'Splendid.' 'Wid ye be wantin' a good bottle of wine?' 'Absolutely.' 'Wid ye have any cash on you, sorr — say, 20 pounds?' 'I'll manage that.' A few minutes later, I was furnished with admirable beef and with an Haut-Brion '61, the perfect therapy for delayed planes, unreturned phone calls and other trivia.

Was I behaving immorally? Certainly not, and I can prove it. After an almighty struggle against temptation, I did not ask the waiter whether he might be around on the next evening. Like Clive, I stand astonished at my own moderation.



'We've found a niche.'

MIND YOUR LANGUAGE

Clean eating

The word of the year, according to Collins, the dictionary people, is *binge-watch*. It means to watch DVDs consecutively or, more vaguely expressed, a *box-set back-to-back*. But I was taken by the runner-up, *clean eating*.

This is a trend. There is a magazine called *Clean Eating* and the definition is not simple. 'The soul of clean eating is consuming food in its most natural state,' it says, if that helps. You should avoid artificial sweeteners, monosodium glutamate, trans fats, some common food dyes and sulphur dioxide (which I admit makes dried apricots taste horrible). There's plenty more.



We have been here before. In Upton Sinclair's novel *The Jungle* (1906), about immigrants, a character envisages magazines devoted to enthusiasms of the time: eugenics, Nietzsche and 'Horace Fletcher, the inventor of the noble science of clean eating'.

Clean eating referred principally to chewing. 'The Fletcherites,' wrote a wag in *The Practitioner* in 1907, 'so far from not giving two bites to a cherry, insist on 32 to a mashed potato.'

Fletcher (1849–1919) became known as the Great Masticator, and his doctrine as Fletcherising. P.G. Wodehouse expected his readers to be familiar with the term. In *The Adventures of Sally* (1921), a dog fight on the beach was 'no ordinary dog fight. It was a stunning mêlée, which would have excited favourable comment even among the blasé residents of a negro quarter'. One 'raffish mongrel was apparently endeavouring to fletcherise a complete stranger of the Sealyham family'.

Fletcherism reminds me of the contemporary fad of Couéism, named after Émile Coué (1857–

1926), whose motto was 'Every day, in every way, I am getting better and better'. This too passes the Wodehouse test of familiarity, being mentioned in the short story 'Mr Potter Takes a Rest Cure' (collected in *Blandings Castle*, 1935) and featuring in one of Wodehouse's lyrics for the Jerome Kern musical *Sitting Pretty* (1924).

I think Coué's slogan remains more familiar than Fletcher's obsession, though people often refer to Gladstone chewing every mouthful 32 times. *Clean eating* seems to have made a clean break from its previous incarnation.

— Dot Wordsworth

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